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MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN

VOLUME THREE



MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN

VOLUME THREE

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MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN

Volume III.

MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE BED OF JUSTICE.

THIS famous bed of justice took place with all the ceremonies which royal pride, on the one hand, and the intrigues which drove the master to this step, on the other, demanded.

The household of the king was placed under arms; an abundance of short-robed archers, soldiers of the watch, and police-officers were commissioned to protect the lord chancellor, who, like a general upon the decisive day, would have to expose his sacred person to secure the success of the enterprise.

The chancellor was execrated. Of this he was well aware, and if his vanity made him fear assassination, those better acquainted with the sentiments of the public toward him could, without exaggerating, have predicted some downright insults, or at least hootings, as likely to fall to his share. The same perquisites were promised to Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who was equally offensive to the popular instincts, improved perhaps by parliamentary debates. The king affected serenity, yet he was not easy.

But he donned with great satisfaction his magnificent robes, and straightway came to the conclusion that nothing protects so surely as majesty. He might have added, "and the love of the people;" but this phrase had been so frequently repeated to him at Metz during his illness that he imagined he could not repeat it now without being charged with plagiarism.

The dauphiness, for whom the sight was a new one, and who at heart perhaps wished to see it, assumed her plaintive look, and wore it during the drive to the ceremony, — which disposed public opinion very favorably toward her.

Madame Dubarry was brave. She possessed that confidence which is given by youth and beauty. Besides, had not everything been said that could be said of her? What could be added now? She appeared, radiant with beauty, as if the splendor of her august lover had been reflected upon her.

The Duc d'Aiguillon marched boldly among the peers who preceded the king. His noble and impressive countenance betrayed no symptoms of grief or discontent, nor did he bear himself triumphantly. To see him walking thus, none would have suspected that the struggle of the king with his parliament was on his account. Fingers were pointed at him in the crowd, terrible glances were darted at him from the parliament, and that was all.

The great hall of the Palais was crammed to overflowing; actors and spectators together made a total of more than three thousand persons.

Outside the Palais the crowd, kept in order by the staves of the officers and the bâtons and maces of the archers, gave token of its presence only by that indescribable hum which is not a voice, which articulates nothing,

but which nevertheless makes itself heard, and which may justly be called the utterance of the people.

The same silence reigned in the great hall when, the sound of footsteps having ceased, and every one having taken his place, the king, majestic and gloomy, had commanded his chancellor to begin the proceedings.

The parliament knew beforehand what the bed of justice held in reserve for them. They fully understood why they had been convoked. They were to hear the unmitigated expression of the royal will; but they knew the patience, not to say the timidity, of the king, and if they feared, it was rather for the consequences of the bed of justice than for the sitting itself.

The chancellor began his address. He was an excellent orator; his exordium was clever, and the amateurs of a demonstrative style found ample scope for study in it. As it proceeded, however, the speech degenerated into a tirade so severe that all the nobility had a smile on their lips, while the parliament felt very ill at ease.

The king, by the mouth of his chancellor, ordered them to cut short the affairs of Brittany, of which he had had enough. He commanded them to be reconciled to the Duc d'Aiguillon, whose services pleased him, and not to interrupt the service of justice, so that everything might go on as in that happy period of the golden age when the flowing streams murmured judicial or argumentative discourses, when the trees were loaded with bags of law papers placed within reach of the advocates and attorneys, who had the right to pluck them as fruit belonging to them.

These flippancies did not reconcile the parliament to the lord chancellor nor to the Duc d'Aiguillon. But the speech had been made, and all reply was impossible.

The members of the parliament, although scarcely able

to contain their vexation, assumed, with that admirable unity which gives so much strength to constituted bodies, a calm and indifferent demeanor, which highly displeased his Majesty and the aristocratic world upon the platform.

The dauphiness turned pale with anger. For the first time she found herself in the presence of popular resistance, and she coldly calculated its power. She had come to this bed of justice with the intention of opposing, at least by her look, the resolution which was about to be adopted there; but gradually she felt herself drawn to make common cause with those of her own caste and race, — so that in proportion as the chancellor attacked the parliament more severely, this proud young creature was indignant to find his words so weak. She fancied she could have found words which would have made this assembly start like a troop of oxen under the goad. In short, she found the chancellor too feeble, and the parliament too strong.

Louis XV. was a physiognomist, as all selfish people would be if they were not sometimes idle as well as selfish. He cast a glance around to observe the effect of his will, expressed in words which he thought tolerably eloquent. The paleness and the compressed lips of the dauphiness showed him what was passing in her mind. As a counterpoise, he turned to look at Madame Dubarry; but instead of the victorious smile he hoped to find there, he saw only an anxious desire to attract the king's looks, as if to judge what he thought.

Nothing intimidates weak minds so much as being forestalled by the wills and minds of others. If they find themselves observed by those who have already taken a resolution, they conclude that they have not done enough; that they are about to be, or have been, ridiculous; that the spectators have a right to expect more than has been done. Then they pass to extremes; the timid man

becomes furious, and a sudden manifestation betrays the effect of this reaction produced by fear upon a fear less powerful.

The king had no need to add a single word to those his chancellor had already spoken; it was not according to etiquette, it was not even necessary. But on this occasion he was possessed of the babbling demon, and making a sign with his hand, he signified that he intended to speak.

Immediately attention was changed to stupor. The members of parliament were all seen to wheel round toward the bed of justice with the precision of a file of soldiers upon drill. The princes, peers, and military felt uneasy. It was not impossible that after so many excellent things had been said, his most Christian Majesty might add something which, to say the least, would be quite useless. Their respect prevented them from giving any other description to the words which might fall from the royal lips.

Monsieur de Richelieu, who had affected to keep aloof from his nephew, now sought communication with him by a glance of the eye and an expression of mysterious intelligence. But his glance, which was becoming rebellious, met the penetrating eye of Madame Dubarry. Richelieu possessed, as no one else did, the precious power of transition; he passed easily from the satirical to the admiring expression, and chose the beautiful countess as the point of intersection between these two extremes. He addressed a smile of gallantry and congratulation, therefore, to Madame Dubarry; but the latter was not duped by it, especially since the old marshal, who had given signs of an understanding with the parliament and the opposing princes, was obliged to continue them, that he might not appear what he really was.

What sights there are in a drop of water, -- that ocean for an observer! What centuries in a second, — that indescribable eternity! All we have related took place while Louis was preparing to speak and was opening his lips. "You have heard," said he, in a firm voice, "what my chancellor has told you of my wishes. Prepare, therefore, to execute them; for such are my intentions, and I shall never change!"

Louis XV. uttered these last words with the noise and force of a thunderbolt. The whole assembly was literally thunderstruck. A shudder passed over the parliament, and was quickly communicated like an electric spark to the crowd. A like thrill was felt by the partisans of the king. Surprise and admiration were on every face and in every heart. The dauphiness involuntarily thanked the king by a lightning glance from her beautiful eyes. Madame Dubarry, electrified, could not refrain from rising, and would have clapped her hands, but for the very natural fear of being stoned as she left the house, or of receiving hundreds of couplets the next morning, each more odious than the others.

Louis could from this moment enjoy his triumph. The parliament bent low, still with the same unanimity. The king rose from his embroidered cushions. Instantly the captain of the guards, the commandant of the household, and all the gentlemen of the king's suite, rose. Drums beat and trumpets sounded outside. The almost silent stir of the people on the arrival was now changed into a deep murmur, which died away in the distance, repressed by the soldiers and archers.

The king proudly crossed the hall, without seeing anything on his way but humbled foreheads. The Duc d'Aiguillon still preceded his Majesty, without abusing his triumph.

The chancellor, having reached the door of the hall, saw the immense crowd of people extending on all sides, and heard their execrations, which reached his ears notwithstanding the distance. He trembled, and said to the archers: "Close around me."

Monsieur de Richelieu bowed low to the Duc d'Aiguillon as he passed, and whispered, "These heads are very low, Duke; some day or other they will rise devilishly high. Take care!"

Madame Dubarry was passing at the moment, accompanied by her brother, the Marquise de Mirepoix, and several ladies. She heard the marshal's words; and as she was more inclined to repartee than malice, she said: "Oh! there is nothing to fear, Marshal; did you not hear his Majesty's words? The king, I think, said he would never change."

"Terrible words indeed, Madame," replied the duke, with a smile; "but happily for us, these poor parliament men did not remark that while saying he would never change, the king looked at you;" and he finished this compliment with one of those inimitable bows which are no longer seen, even upon the stage.

Madame Dubarry was a woman, and by no means a politician. She saw only the compliment, where D'Aiguillon detected plainly the epigram and the threat. Therefore she replied with a smile, while her ally turned pale and bit his lips with vexation upon seeing that the marshal's resentment was still unappeased.

The effect of the bed of justice was for the moment favorable to the royal cause. But it frequently happens that a great blow only stuns, and it is remarked that after the stunning effect has passed away, the blood circulates with more vigor and purity than before. Such at least were the reflections made by a little group of plainly

dressed persons who were stationed as spectators at the corner of the Quai-aux-Fleurs and the Rue de la Barillerie, on seeing the king, attended by his brilliant cortége, leave the hall. They were three in number. Chance had brought them together at this corner, and there they seemed to study with interest the impressions of the crowd. Without previous acquaintance with one another, they had been placed in sympathy by the exchange of a few words, and had discussed the sitting even before it was over.

"These passions are well ripened," said one of them, an old man with bright eyes, and a mild and honest expression. "A bed of justice is a great work."

"Yes," replied a young man, smiling bitterly; "yes, if the work realize the title."

"Monsieur," replied the old man, turning round, "I think I should know you; I fancy I have seen you before."

"On the night of the 30th of May. You are not mistaken, Monsieur Rousseau."

"Oh! you are that young surgeon,—my countryman, Monsieur Marat!"

"Yes, Monsieur, at your service."

The two men exchanged salutations. The third had not yet spoken. He was also young, eminently handsome, and aristocratic in his appearance, and during the whole ceremony had unceasingly observed the crowd. The young surgeon moved away the first, and plunged into the densest masses of the people, who, less grateful than Rousseau, had already forgotten him, but whose memory he expected some day to revive.

The other young man waited until he was gone; and then, addressing Rousseau, "Monsieur," said he, "you do not go."

"Oh! I am too old to venture into such a mob."

"In that case," said the unknown, lowering his voice, "I will see you again this evening in the Rue Plastrière, Monsieur Rousseau, — do not fail."

The philosopher started as if a ghost had risen before him. His complexion, always pale, became livid. He made an effort to reply to this strange appeal, but the man had already disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE WORDS OF THE UNKNOWN UPON J. J. ROUSSEAU.

On hearing these singular words spoken by a man whom he did not know, Rousseau, trembling and unhappy, plunged into the crowd; and without remembering that he was old and naturally timid, elbowed his way through it. He soon reached the bridge of Notre-Dame; then, still plunged in his revery, and muttering to himself, he crossed the quarter of La Grève, taking the shortest way to his own dwelling.

"So," said he to himself, "this secret, which the initiated guard at the peril of their lives, is in possession of the first comer. This is what mysterious associations gain by passing through the popular sieve. A man recognizes me who knows that I shall be his associate, perhaps his accomplice, yonder. Such a state of things is absurd and intolerable;" and while he spoke, Rousseau walked forward quickly, — he, usually so cautious, especially since his accident in the Rue Ménilmontant.

"Thus," continued the philosopher, "I must wish, forsooth, to sound to the bottom these plans of human regeneration which some spirits who boast of the title of 'illuminati' propose to carry out. I was foolish enough to imagine that any good ideas could come from Germany, — that land of beer and fog, — and may have compromised my name by joining it to those of fools or plotters, whom it will serve as a cloak to shelter their folly.

Oh, no! it shall not be thus. No; a flash of lightning has shown me the abyss, and I will not rashly throw myself into it."

Rousseau paused to take breath, resting upon his cane, and standing motionless for a moment. "Yet it was a beautiful chimera," he continued. "Liberty in the midst of slavery, — the future conquered without noise and struggle, — the snare mysteriously woven while earth's tyrants slept. It was too beautiful! I was a fool to believe it! I will not be the sport of fears, of suspicions, of shadows, which are unworthy of a free spirit and an independent body."

He had thus far communed with himself, and was continuing his progress, when the sight of some of Monsieur de Sartines' agents gazing round with their ubiquitous eyes frightened the free spirit, and gave such an impulse to the independent body that he plunged into the deepest shadows of the pillars near which he was walking. From these pillars it was not far to the Rue Plastrière. Rousseau passed rapidly over that distance, ascended the stairs to his domicile, breathing like a stag pursued by the hunters, and sank upon a chair, unable to utter a word in answer to all Thérèse's questions.

At last he recovered sufficiently to account for his emotion; it was the walk, the heat, the news of the king's angry remarks at the bed of justice, the commotion caused by the popular terror, — a sort of panic, in short, which had spread among all who witnessed what had happened.

Thérèse grumblingly replied that all that was no reason for allowing the dinner to cool; and, moreover, that a man ought not to be such a cowardly weakling as to be frightened at the least noise.

Rousseau could make no reply to this last argument, which he himself had so frequently stated in other terms.

Thérèse added that these philosophers, these imaginative people, were all the same; that they always talked very grandly in their writings, they said that they feared nothing; that God and man were very little to them: but at the slightest barking of the smallest poodle, they cried, "Help!" — at the least feverishness they exclaimed, "My God! I am dead."

This was one of Thérèse's favorite themes, that which most excited her eloquence, and to which Rousseau, who was naturally timid, found it most difficult to reply. Rousseau, therefore, pursued his own thoughts to the sound of this discordant music, — thoughts which were certainly as valuable as Thérèse's, notwithstanding the abuse the latter showered so plentifully on him.

"Happiness," said he, "is composed of perfume and noise; now, noise and perfume are conventional things. Who can prove that the onion smells less sweet than the rose, or that the peacock sings less melodiously than the nightingale?" after which axiom, which might pass for an excellent paradox, they sat down to table.

After dinner Rousseau did not, as usual, sit down to his harpsichord. He paced up and down the apartment, and stopped a hundred times to look out of the window, apparently studying the physiognomy of the Rue Plastrière. Thérèse was forthwith seized with one of those fits of jealousy which peevish people — that is to say, the least really jealous people in the world — often indulge in for the sake of opposition. For if there is a disagreeable affectation in the world, it is the affectation of a fault; the affectation of virtue may be tolerated.

Thérèse, who held Rousseau's age, complexion, mind, and manners in the utmost contempt; who thought him old, sickly, and ugly, — did not fear that any one would run off with her husband; she never dreamed that other

women might look upon him with other feelings than her own. But as the pains inflicted by jealousy constitute woman's favorite mode of punishment, Thérèse sometimes indulged herself in the pleasure of administering them. Seeing Rousseau, therefore, approach the window so frequently, and observing his dreaming and restless air, she said: "Very good! I understand your agitation; you have just left some one."

Rousseau turned to her with a startled look, which served as an additional proof of the truth of her suspicions.

"Some one you wish to see again?" she continued.

"What do you say?" asked Rousseau.

"Yes, we make assignations, it seems."

"Oh!" said Rousseau, comprehending that Thérèse was jealous, — "an assignation! You are mad, Thérèse!"

"I know perfectly well that it would be madness in you," said she; "but you are capable of any folly. Go, go, with your papier-mâché complexion, your palpitations, and your coughs, — go, and make conquests! It is one way of getting on in the world!"

"But, Thérèse, you know there is not a word of truth in what you are saying!" said Rousseau, angrily. "Let me think in peace."

"You are a libertine!" said Thérèse, with the utmost seriousness.

Rousseau reddened as if she had hit the truth, or as if he had received a compliment. Thérèse forthwith thought herself justified in putting on a terrible countenance, turning the whole household upside down, slamming the doors violently, and playing with Rousseau's tranquillity as children play with those metal rings which they shut up in a box and shake to make a noise.

Rousseau took refuge in his cabinet; this uproar had

rather confused his ideas. He reflected that there would doubtless be some danger in not being present at the mysterious ceremony of which the stranger had spoken at the corner of the Quai. "If there are punishments for traitors, there will also be punishments for the lukewarm or careless," thought he. "Now I have always remarked that great dangers mean in reality nothing, just like loud threats. The cases in which either are productive of any result are extremely rare; but petty revenges, underhand attacks, mischievous tricks, and other such small coin, — these we must be on our guard against. Some day the masonic brothers may repay my contempt by stretching a string across my staircase; I shall stumble over it and break a leg, or the six or eight teeth I have left. Or else they will have a stone ready to fall upon my head when I am passing under a scaffolding; or, better still, there may be some pamphleteer belonging to the fraternity living quite near me, upon the same floor, perhaps, looking from his windows into my room. That is not impossible, since the reunions take place even in the Rue Plastrière. Well, this wretch will write stupid lampoons on me, which will make me ridiculous all over Paris. Have I not enemies everywhere?"

A moment afterward Rousseau's thoughts took a different turn. "Well," said he to himself, "but where is courage? Where is honor? Shall I be afraid of myself? Shall I see in my glass only the face of a coward, — a slave? No, it shall not be so. Though the whole world should combine to ruin me, though the houses of the street should fall upon me, I will go. What pitiable reasoning does fear produce! Since I met this man I have been continually turning in a circle of absurdities. I doubt every one, even myself! That is not logical. I know myself, I am not an enthusiast; if I thought I saw

wonders in this projected association, it is because there are wonders in it. Who will say I may not be the regenerator of the human race, — I, who am sought after, — I, whom the mysterious agents of an unlimited power have come to consult on the faith set forth in my works? Shall I recoil when the time has come to follow up my work, to substitute practice for theory?"

Rousseau became animated. "What can be more beautiful! Ages roll on; the people rise out of their brutishness; step follows step in the darkness, toward the hand stretched out in the shadows; the immense pyramid is raised, upon the summit of which, as its crowning glory, future ages shall place the bust of Rousseau, citizen of Geneva, who risked his liberty, his life, that he might act as he had spoken, — that he might be faithful to his motto, 'Vitam impendere vero.'"

Thereupon Rousseau, in a fit of enthusiasm, seated himself at his harpsichord, and exalted his imagination by the loudest, the most sonorous, and the most warlike melodies he could call forth from its sounding cavity.

Night closed in. Thérèse, wearied with her vain endeavors to torment her captive, had fallen asleep upon her chair. Rousseau, with beating heart, took his new coat, as if to go out on a pleasure excursion, glanced for a moment in the glass at the play of his black eyes, and was charmed to find that they were sparkling and expressive.

He grasped his knotted stick in his hand, and slipped out of the room without awakening Thérèse. But when he arrived at the foot of the stairs, and had drawn back the bolt of the street-door, Rousseau paused and looked out, to assure himself as to the condition of the neighborhood.

No carriage was passing. The street, as usual, was full of idlers gazing at each other, as they do at this day, while

many stopped at the shop-windows to ogle the pretty girls; a new-comer would therefore be quite unnoticed in such a crowd. Rousseau plunged into it; he had not far to go. A ballad-singer, with a cracked violin, was stationed before the door which had been pointed out to him. This music, to which every true Parisian's ear is extremely sensitive, filled the street with echoes which repeated the last bars of the air sung by the violin or by the singer himself. Nothing could be more unfavorable, therefore, to the free passage along the street than the crowd gathered at this spot, and the passers-by were obliged to turn either to the right or left of the group. Those who, going in one direction, turned to the left, took the centre of the street; those to the right, brushed along the side of the house indicated, and *vice versa* with those going in the other direction.

Rousseau remarked that several of these passers-by disappeared on the way, as if they had fallen into some trap. He concluded that these people had come with the same purpose as himself, and determined to imitate their manœuvre. It was not difficult to accomplish. Having stationed himself in the rear of the assembly of listeners, as if to join their number, he watched the first person whom he saw entering the open alley. More timid than they, probably because he had more to risk, he waited until a particularly favorable opportunity should present itself.

He did not wait long. A cabriolet which drove along the street divided the circle, and caused the two hemispheres to fall back upon the houses on either side. Rousseau thus found himself driven to the very entrance of the passage; he had only to walk on. He observed that all the idlers were looking at the cabriolet, and had turned their backs on the house; he took advantage of this circumstance, and disappeared in the dark passage.

After advancing a few steps he perceived a lamp, beneath which a man was seated quietly, like a stall-keeper after the day's business was over, reading, or seeming to read, a newspaper. At the sound of Rousseau's footsteps this man raised his head and placed his finger upon his breast, upon which the lamp threw a strong light. Rousseau replied to this symbolic gesture by raising his finger to his lips.

The man then immediately rose, and pushing open a door at his right hand, so artificially concealed in the wooden panel, of which it formed a part, as to be wholly invisible, he showed Rousseau a very steep staircase which descended underground. Rousseau entered, and the door closed quickly but noiselessly after him.

The philosopher descended the steps slowly, assisted by his cane. He thought it rather disrespectful that the brothers should cause him, at this his first interview, to run the risk of breaking his neck or his legs. But the stair, if steep, was not long. Rousseau counted seventeen steps, and then felt as if suddenly plunged into a highly heated atmosphere.

This moist heat proceeded from the breath of a considerable number of men who were assembled in the low hall. Rousseau remarked that the walls were tapestried with red and white drapery, on which figures of various implements of labor, rather symbolic, doubtless, than real, were depicted. A single lamp hung from the vaulted ceiling, and threw a gloomy light upon the faces of those present, who were conversing with each other on the wooden benches, and who had the appearance of honest and respectable citizens.

The floor was neither polished nor carpeted, but was covered with a thick mat of plaited rushes, which deadened the sound of the footsteps. Rousseau's entrance

therefore produced no sensation; no one seemed to have remarked it.

Five minutes previously Rousseau had longed for nothing so much as such an entrance; and yet when he had entered, he felt annoyed that he had succeeded so well. He saw an unoccupied place on one of the back benches, and installed himself as modestly as possible on this seat, behind all the others. He counted thirty-three heads in the assembly. A desk, placed upon a platform, seemed to wait for a president.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSE IN THE RUE PLASTRIÈRE.

Rousseau remarked that the conversation of those present was very cautious and reserved. Many did not open their lips, and scarcely three or four couples exchanged a few words. Those who did not speak endeavored even to conceal their faces, which was not difficult, thanks to the great body of shadow cast by the platform of the expected president. The refuge of these last, who seemed to be the timid individuals of the assembly, was behind this platform. But in return, two or three members of the company gave themselves a great deal of trouble to recognize their colleagues. They came and went, talked among themselves, and frequently disappeared through a door before which was drawn a black curtain, ornamented with red flames.

In a short time a bell was rung. A man immediately rose from the end of the bench upon which he was seated, and where he had been associated with the other freemasons, and took his place upon the platform. After making signs with the hands and fingers, which were repeated by all those present, and adding a last sign more explicit than the others, he declared the sitting opened.

This man was entirely unknown to Rousseau. Beneath the exterior of a working-man in easy circumstances he concealed great presence of mind, aided by an elocution as flowing as could have been wished for in an orator. His speech was brief, and to the point. He declared that

the lodge had been assembled to proceed to the election of a new brother.

"You will not be surprised," said he, "that we have assembled you in a place where the usual ceremonies cannot be performed. These ceremonies have seemed useless to the chiefs; the brother whom we are to receive to-day is one of the lights of contemporary philosophy,—a thoughtful spirit, who will be devoted to us from conviction, not from fear. One who has discovered all the mysteries of nature and of the human heart cannot be treated in the same manner as the simple mortal from whom we demand the help of his arm, his will, and his gold. That we may have the co-operation of his distinguished mind, of his honest and energetic character, his promise and his assent are sufficient."

The speaker, when he had concluded, looked round to mark the effect of his words. Upon Rousseau the effect had been magical; the Genevese philosopher was acquainted with the preparatory mysteries of freemasonry, and looked upon them with the repugnance natural to enlightened minds. The concessions, absurd because they were useless, which the chiefs required from the candidates, that they might simulate fear when every one knew there was nothing to fear, seemed to him to be the acme of puerility and senseless superstition.

Besides this, the timid philosopher, an enemy to all personal exhibitions and manifestations, would have felt most unhappy had he been obliged to serve as a spectacle for people whom he did not know, and who would have certainly played their jokes upon him with more or less good faith. That these ceremonies should in his case be omitted was therefore more than a satisfaction to him. He knew the strictness with which equality was enforced by the masonic principles; therefore an exception in his

favor constituted a triumph. He was preparing to say some words in reply to the gracious address of the president, when a voice was heard among the audience.

"At least," said this voice, which was sharp and discordant, "since you think yourselves obliged to treat in this princely fashion a man like ourselves, since you dispense in his case with physical pains, as if the pursuit of liberty through bodily suffering were not one of our symbols, we hope you will not confer a precious title upon an unknown person without having questioned him according to the usual ritual, and without having received his profession of faith."

Rousseau turned round to discover the features of the aggressive person who so rudely jostled his triumphant car, and with the greatest surprise recognized the young surgeon whom he had that morning met upon the Quai-aux-Fleurs. A conviction of his own honesty of purpose, perhaps also a feeling of disdain for the "precious title," prevented him from replying.

"You have heard?" said the president, addressing Rousseau.

"Perfectly," replied the philosopher, who trembled slightly at the sound of his voice as it echoed from the vaulted roof of the dark hall, "and I am the more surprised at the interpellation when I see from whom it proceeds. What! a man whose profession it is to combat what is called physical suffering, and to assist his brethren, who are common men as well as freemasons, preaches the utility of physical suffering! He chooses a singular path through which to lead the creature to happiness, the sick to health."

"We do not here speak of this or that person," replied the young man, warmly; "I am supposed to be unknown to the candidate, and he to me. I am merely the utterer of an abstract truth, and I assert that the chief has done

wrong in making an exception in favor of any one. I do not recognize in him," pointing to Rousseau, "the philosopher, and he must not recognize the surgeon in me. We shall perhaps walk side by side through life, without a look or gesture betraying our intimacy, which nevertheless, thanks to the laws of the association, is more binding than all vulgar friendships. I repeat, therefore, that if it has been thought well to spare this candidate the usual trials, he ought at least to have the usual questions put to him."

Rousseau made no reply. The president saw depicted on his features disgust at this discussion, and regret at having engaged in the enterprise. "Brother," said he, authoritatively to the young man, "you will please be silent when the chief speaks, and do not venture on light grounds to blame his actions, which are sovereign here."

"I have a right to speak," replied the young man, more gently.

"To speak, yes; but not to blame. The brother who is about to enter our association is so well known that we have no wish to employ in our masonic relations with him a ridiculous and useless mystery. All the brothers here present know his name, and his name itself is a perfect guarantee. But as he himself, I am certain, loves equality, I request him to answer the question which I shall put to him merely for form: 'What do you seek in this association?'"

Rousseau made two steps forward in advance of the crowd, and his dreamy and melancholy eye wandered over the assembly. "I seek," said he, "that which I do not find, — truths, not sophisms. Why should you surround me with poniards which do not wound, with poisons which are only clear water, and with traps under which mattresses are spread! I know the extent of human endurance. I know the vigor of my physical frame. If you

were to destroy it, it would not be worth your while to elect me a brother, for when dead I could be of no use to you. Therefore you do not wish to kill me, still less to wound me; and all the doctors in the world would not make me approve of an initiation in the course of which my limbs had been broken. I have served a longer apprenticeship to pain than any of you; I have sounded the body, and probed even to the soul. If I consented to come among you when I was *solicited*," — and he laid particular emphasis on the word, — "it was because I thought I might be useful. I give, therefore; I do not receive. Alas! before you could do anything to defend me, before you could restore me to liberty were I imprisoned, before you could give me bread if I were starving, or consolation if I were afflicted, — before, I repeat, you could do anything, the brother whom you admit to-day, if this gentleman," turning to Marat, "permits it, — this brother will have paid the last tribute of nature; for progress is halting, light is slow, and from the grave into which he will be thrown, none of you can raise him."

"You are mistaken, illustrious brother," said a mild and penetrating voice, which charmed Rousseau's ear; "there is more than you think in the association into which you are about to enter, — there is the whole future destiny of the world. The future, you are aware, is hope, is science, — the future is God, who will give his light to the world, since he has promised to give it; for God cannot lie."

Astonished at this elevated language, Rousseau looked around and recognized the young man who had made the appointment with him in the morning at the bed of justice. This man, who was dressed in black with great neatness, and was characterized especially by a marked air of distinction, was leaning against the side of the platform, and

his face, illumined by the lamp, shone in all its beauty, grace, and expressiveness.

"Ah!" said Rousseau, "science, — the bottomless abyss! You speak to me of science, consolation, futurity, hope; another speaks of matter, of rigor, and of violence. Whom shall I believe? Shall it be, then, in this assembly of brothers as it is among the devouring wolves of the world which stirs above us? Wolves and sheep! Listen to my profession of faith, since you have not read it in my books."

"Your books!" exclaimed Marat. "They are sublime, — I confess it; but they are Utopias. You are useful in the same point of view as Pythagoras, Solon, and Cicero the sophist. You point out the good, but it is an artificial, unsubstantial, unattainable good. You are like one who would feed a hungry crowd with air-bubbles, more or less illumined by the sun."

"Have you ever seen," said Rousseau, frowning, "great commotions of nature take place without preparation? Have you seen the birth of a man, — that common and yet sublime event? Have you not seen him collect substance and life in the womb of his mother for nine months? Ah! you wish me to regenerate the world with actions. That is not to regenerate, Monsieur, it is to revolutionize!"

"Then," retorted the young surgeon, violently, "you do not wish for independence; you do not wish for liberty!"

"On the contrary," replied Rousseau; "independence is my idol, liberty is my goddess. But I wish for a mild and radiant liberty, — a liberty which warms and vivifies. I wish for an equality which will connect men by ties of friendship, not by fear. I wish for education, for the instruction of each element of the social body, as the mechanic wishes for harmonious movement, as the cabinetmaker wishes for perfect exactness, for the closest fitting,

in each piece of his work. I repeat it, I wish that for which I have written, — progress, concord, devotion."

A smile of disdain flitted over Marat's lips. "Yes," he said, "rivulets of milk and honey, Elysian fields like Virgil's, poetic dreams which philosophy would make a reality."

Rousseau made no reply. It seemed to him too hard that he should have to defend his moderation, — he whom all Europe called a violent innovator.

He took his seat in silence, after having satisfied his ingenuous and timid mind by appealing with a glance to the person who had just before defended him, and obtaining his tacit approbation.

The president rose. "You have all heard?" said he.

"Yes," replied the entire assembly.

"Does the candidate appear to you worthy of entering the association, and does he comprehend its duties?"

"Yes," replied the assembly again; but this time with a reserve which did not evince much unanimity.

"Take the oath," said the president to Rousseau.

"It would be disagreeable to me," said the philosopher, with some pride, "to displease any members of this association; and I must repeat the words I made use of just now, as they are the expression of my earnest conviction. If I were an orator, I would put them in a more eloquent manner; but my organ of speech is rebellious, and always betrays my thoughts when I ask it for an immediate translation. I wish to say that I can do more for the world and for you out of this assembly, than I could were I strictly to follow your usages. Leave me, therefore, to my work, to my weakness, to my loneliness. I have told you I am descending to the grave; grief, infirmity, and want hurry me on. You cannot delay this great work of nature. Abandon me; I am not made for the society of men, — I

hate and avoid them. Nevertheless, I serve them, because I am a man myself; and in serving them I fancy them better than they are. Now you have my whole thought; I shall not say another word."

"Then you refuse to take the oath?" said Marat, with some emotion.

"I refuse positively; I do not wish to join the association. I see too many convincing proofs to assure me that I should be useless to it."

"Brother," said the unknown personage with the conciliatory voice,—"allow me to call you so, for we are brothers, independently of all combinations of the human mind,—brother! do not give way to a very natural feeling of irritation; sacrifice your legitimate pride; do for us what is repulsive to yourself. Your advice, your ideas, your presence, are light to our paths. Do not plunge us in the twofold darkness of your absence and your refusal."

"You are in error," said Rousseau; "I take nothing from you, since I should never have given you more than I have given to the whole world,—to the first chance reader, to the first consulter of the journals. If you wish for the name and essence of Rousseau—"

"We do wish for them!" said several voices, politely.

"Then make a collection of my books; place them upon the table of your president; and when you are taking the opinions of the meeting, and my turn to give one comes, open my books,—you will find my counsel and my vote there."

Rousseau made a step toward the door.

"Stop one moment!" said the surgeon. "Mind is free, and that of the illustrious philosopher more than any other; but it would not be regular to have allowed a stranger even to enter our sanctuary, who, not being

bound by any tacit agreement, might, without dishonesty, reveal our mysteries."

Rousseau smiled compassionately. "You want an oath of secrecy?" said he.

"You have said it."

"I am ready."

"Be good enough to read the formula, venerable brother," said Marat.

The venerable brother read the following form of oath: "I swear, in the presence of the Eternal God, the Architect of the Universe, and before my superiors and the respectable assembly which surrounds me, never to reveal or to make known or write anything which has happened in my presence, under penalty, in case of indiscretion, of being punished according to the laws of the Great Founder, of my superiors, and the anger of my fathers."

Rousseau had already raised his hand to swear, when the unknown, who had followed the progress of the debate with a sort of authority which no one seemed to dispute, although he was not distinguished from the crowd, approached the president, and whispered some words in his ear.

"True," said the venerable chief; and he added: "You are a man, not a brother; you are a man of honor, placed toward us only in the position of a fellow-man. We here abjure, therefore, our distinguishing peculiarity, and ask from you merely your word of honor to forget what has passed between us."

"Like a dream of the morning, — I swear it upon my honor," said Rousseau, with emotion. With these words he retired, and many of the members followed him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REPORT.

When the members of the second and third orders had gone, seven of the associates remained. They were the leading members of the chapter. They recognized each other by means of signs which proved their initiation to a superior degree.

Their first care was to close the doors. Then their president made himself known by displaying a ring, on which were engraved the mysterious letters, L. P. D.[1]

This president was charged with the most important correspondence of the order. He was in communication with the six other chiefs, who dwelt in Switzerland, Russia, America, Sweden, Spain, and Italy. He brought with him some of the most important documents he had received from his colleagues, in order to communicate their contents to the superior circle of initiated brothers, who were above the others but beneath him. We have already recognized this chief; it was Balsamo.

The most important of the letters contained threatening intelligence. It was from Sweden, and had been written by Swedenborg. "Watch the South, brothers," it said; "under its burning rays has been hatched a traitor who will ruin you. Watch in Paris, brothers, — the traitor dwells there; he possesses the secrets of the order; a feeling of hatred urges him on. A murmuring voice, a rustling flight, whispers the denunciation in my ear. I see a ter-

[1] Lilia pedibus destrue.

rible vengeance coming, but perhaps it will be too late. In the mean time, brothers, watch! watch! A traitorous tongue, even though it be uninstructed, is sometimes sufficient to overthrow our most skilfully constructed plans."

The brothers looked at each other in mute surprise. The language of the fierce old sage, his prescience, which had acquired an imposing authority from many striking examples, contributed in no small degree to cast a gloom over the meeting at which Balsamo presided. Balsamo himself, who placed implicit faith in Swedenborg's second-sight, could not resist the serious and painful impression made on him by the reading of that letter. "Brothers," said he, "the inspired prophet is rarely deceived. Watch, then, as he bids you. You know now, as I do, that the struggle has begun. Let us not be conquered by these ridiculous enemies, whose power we sap in the utmost security. You must not forget that they have mercenary swords at their command, — powerful weapons in this world, among those who do not see beyond the limits of our terrestrial life. Brothers, let us distrust these hired traitors."

"These fears seem to me puerile," said a voice; "we gather strength daily, and we are directed by brilliant genius and powerful hands."

Balsamo bowed his thanks for the flattering eulogy.

"Yes, but as our illustrious president has said, treason creeps everywhere," replied a brother, who was no other than the surgeon Marat, promoted, notwithstanding his youth, to a superior grade, in virtue of which he now sat for the first time on a consulting committee. "Remember, brothers, that by doubling the bait, you may make a more important capture. If Monsieur de Sartines with a bag of crown-pieces can purchase the revelations of one of our obscurer brothers, with a million or with holding out

the hope of advancement, he may buy over one of our superiors. Now, with us, the obscurer brother knows nothing. At the most he is cognizant of the names of some of his colleagues, and these names signify nothing. Ours is an excellent constitution, but it is eminently aristocratic; the inferiors know nothing, can do nothing. They are called together to say or to hear trifles, and yet they contribute their time and their money to increase the solidity of our edifice. Reflect that the workman brings only the stone and the mortar; but without stone and mortar could you build the house? Now, the workman receives a very small salary, but I consider him equal to the architect who plans, creates, and superintends the whole work; and I consider him equal because he is a man, and in the eyes of a philosopher one man is worth as much as another, seeing that he bears his misfortunes and his fate equally, and because, even more than another man, he is exposed to the fall of a stone or the breaking of a scaffold."

"I must interrupt you, brother," said Balsamo. "You diverge from the question which alone ought to occupy our thoughts. Your failing, brother, is that you are over-zealous, and prone to generalize discussions. Our business on the present occasion is not to decide whether our constitution be good or bad, but to uphold the integrity of that constitution in all its strength. If I wished, however, to discuss the point with you, I should answer, No; the instrument which receives the impulse is not equal to the creating genius; the workman is not equal to the architect; the arm is not equal to the brain."

"Suppose Monsieur de Sartines should seize one of our least important brethren," cried Marat, warmly, "would he not send him to rot in the Bastille equally with you or me?"

"Granted; but the misfortune in that case is for the individual only, not for the order, which with us should take precedence of all else. If, on the contrary, the chief is imprisoned, the whole conspiracy is at an end. When the general is absent, the army loses the battle. Therefore, brothers, watch over the safety of the chiefs!"

"Yes, but let them in return watch over ours."

"That is their duty."

"And let their faults be doubly punished."

"Again, brother, you wander from the constitution of the order. Have you forgotten that the oath which binds all the members of the association is the same, and threatens all with the same punishment?"

"The great ones always escape."

"That is not the opinion of the great themselves, brothers. Listen to the conclusion of the letter which one of the greatest among us, our prophet Swedenborg, has written. This is what he adds: 'The blow will come from one of the mighty ones, one of the mightiest of the order; or if it comes not directly from him, the fault will be traceable to him. Remember that fire and water may be accomplices; one gives light, the other revelation. Watch, brothers, over all and over each, watch!'"

"Then," said Marat, seizing upon those points in Balsamo's speech and Swedenborg's letter which suited his purpose, "let us repeat the oath which binds us together, and let us pledge ourselves to maintain it in its utmost vigor, whosoever he may be who shall betray us or be the cause of our betrayal."

Balsamo paused for a moment, and then, rising from his seat, he pronounced the consecrated words, with which our readers are already acquainted, in a slow, solemn, terrible voice:—

"In the name of the crucified Son, I swear to break all

the bonds of nature which unite me to father, mother, brother, sister, wife, relation, friend, mistress, king, benefactor, and to any being whatever to whom I have promised faith, obedience, gratitude, or service. I swear to reveal to the chief, whom I acknowledge according to the statutes of the order, all that I have seen or done, read or heard, learned or divined, and henceforward to search out and penetrate into that which may not openly present itself to my eyes. I will honor poison, steel, and fire as a means of ridding the world, by death or idiocy, of the enemies of truth and liberty. I subscribe to the law of silence. I consent to die, as if struck by lightning, on the day when I shall have merited this punishment, and I await, without murmuring, the knife which will reach me, in whatsoever part of the world I may be."

Then the seven men who composed this solemn assembly repeated the oath, word for word, standing, and with uncovered heads.

When the words of the oath had been repeated by all, "We are now guaranteed against treachery," said Balsamo; "let us no longer mingle extraneous matter with our discussion. I have to make my report to the committee of the principal events of the year. My summary of the affairs of France may have interest for enlightened and zealous minds like yours; I will begin with it.

"France is situated in the centre of Europe, as the heart in the centre of the body; it lives, and radiates life. It is in its palpitations that we must look for the cause of all the disorder in the general organization. I came to France, therefore, and approached Paris as a physician approaches the heart. I listened, I felt, I experimented. When I entered it a year ago, the monarchy harassed it; to-day, vices kill it. I found it necessary to hasten the effect of these fatal debauches, and therefore I assisted them.

"An obstacle was in my way; this obstacle was a man, not only the first, but the most powerful man in the State, next to the king. He was gifted with some of those qualities which please other men. He was too proud, it is true, but his pride was applied to his works. He knew how to lighten the subjection of the people by making them believe, even sometimes to see, that they were a portion of the State; and by consulting them on their grievances, he raised a standard around which the mass will always rally, — the spirit of nationality. He hated the English, the natural enemies of the French; he hated the favorite, the natural enemy of the working-classes. Now, if this man would have been a usurper, if he would have been one of us, if he would have trodden in our path and acted for our ends, — I would have assisted him; I would have kept him in power; I would have upheld him by the resources I am able to create for my protégés; for instead of patching up decayed royalty, he would have assisted us in overthrowing it on the appointed day. But he belonged to the aristocracy; he was born with a feeling of respect for that first rank to which he could not aspire, — for the monarchy, which he dared not attack; he served royalty while despising the king; he did worse, — he acted as a shield to this royalty against which our blows were directed. The parliament and the people, full of respect for this living dike which opposed itself to the encroachments of the royal prerogative, limited themselves to a moderate resistance, certain as they were of having in him a powerful assistant when the moment should arrive.

"I understood the position; I undertook Monsieur de Choiseul's fall. This laborious task, at which for ten years so much hatred and interest had labored in vain, I began and terminated in a few months, by means which it would be useless to reveal to you. By a secret, which

constitutes one of my powers, — a power the greater, because it will remain eternally hidden from the eyes of all, and will manifest itself only by its effects, — I overthrew and banished Monsieur de Choiseul, and attached to his overthrow a long train of regret, disappointment, lamentation, and anger. You see now that my labor bears its fruit; all France asks for Choiseul, and rises to demand him back, as orphans turn to heaven when God has taken away their earthly parents.

"The parliament employs the only right it possesses, — the right of inertia; it has ceased to act. In a well-organized body, such as a State of the first rank ought to be, the paralysis of any essential organ is fatal. Now, the parliament in the social, is what the stomach is in the human, body. When the parliament ceases to act, the people — the intestines of the State — can work no longer; and consequently must cease to pay, and the gold — that is, the blood — will be wanting.

"There will be a struggle, no doubt; but who can combat against the people? Not the army, that daughter of the people, which eats the bread of the laborer and drinks the wine of the vine-grower. There remain then the king's household, the privileged classes, the guards, the Swiss, the musketeers, — in all, scarce five or six thousand men. What can this handful of pygmies do when the nation shall rise like a giant?"

"Let them rise, then; let them rise!" cried several voices.

"Yes, yes, to the work!" exclaimed Marat.

"Young man, I have not yet consulted you," said Balsamo, coldly. "This sedition of the masses," continued he, "this revolt of the weak become strong by their number against the powerful single-handed, less thoughtful, less ripened, less experienced minds would arouse

immediately, and would succeed with a facility which terrifies me. But I have reflected and studied; I have mixed with the people, and assuming their dress, their perseverance, even their coarseness, I have viewed them so closely that I have made myself, as it were, one of themselves. I know them now; I cannot be deceived in them. They are strong, but ignorant; irritable, but not revengeful. In a word, they are not yet ripe for sedition such as I mean and wish for. They want the instruction which will make them see events in the double light of example and utility; they want the memory of their past experience.

"They resemble those daring young men whom I have seen in Germany, at the public festivals, eagerly climb a vessel's mast, at the top of which hung a ham and a silver cup. They started at first burning with eagerness, and mounted with surprising rapidity; but when they had almost reached the goal, when they had only to extend the arm to seize their prize, their strength abandoned them, and they slipped to the bottom amid the hootings of the crowd. The first time it happened as I have said; the second time they husbanded their strength and their breath, but taking more time, they failed by their slowness, as they had before failed from too great haste. At last, the third time, they took a middle course between precipitation and delay; and this time they succeeded. This is the plan I propose: efforts, never-ceasing efforts, which gradually approach the goal, until the day arrives when they will be crowned by infallible success."

Balsamo ceased, and looked around upon his audience, among whom the passions of youth and inexperience were boiling over. "Speak, brother," said he to Marat, who was more agitated than the others.

"I will be brief," said Marat. "Efforts soothe the

people when they do not discourage them. Efforts! that is the theory of Monsieur Rousseau, citizen of Geneva, a great poet, but a slow and timid genius, — a useless citizen, whom Plato would have driven from his republic! Wait! Ever wait! Since the emancipation of the commons, since the revolt of the *maillotins*, — for seven centuries we have waited! Count the generations which have died in the mean time, and then dare to pronounce the fatal word 'wait' as your motto of the future! Monsieur Rousseau speaks to us of opposition as it was practised in the reign of the Grand Monarque, as Molière practised it in his comedies, Boileau in his satires, and La Fontaine in his fables, — in the society of marchionesses and at the feet of kings. Poor and feeble opposition, which has not advanced the cause of humanity one jot! Lisping children recite these veiled theories without understanding them, and go to sleep while they recite. Rabelais also was a politician in your sense of the word; but with such political views people laugh, and correct nothing. Have you seen one single abuse redressed for the last three hundred years? Enough of poets and theorists! Let us have deeds, not words. We have given France up to the care of physicians for three hundred years, and it is time now that surgery should enter in its turn, scalpel and saw in hand. Society is gangrened; let us stop the gangrene with the steel. He may wait who rises from his table to recline upon a couch of roses, from which the ruffled leaves are blown by the breath of his slaves; for the satisfied stomach exhales grateful vapors which mount into the brain, and recreate and vivify it. But hunger, misery, despair, are not satiated nor consoled with verses, with sentences and fables. They cry out loudly in their sufferings; deaf indeed must he be who does not hear their lamentations, — accursed he who does not reply to them!

A revolt, even should it be crushed, will enlighten the minds more than a thousand years of precepts, more than three centuries of examples. It will enlighten the kings, if it do not overthrow them. That is much; that is enough!"

A murmur of admiration rose from several lips.

"Where are our enemies?" pursued Marat. "Above us! above us! They guard the doors of the palaces, they surround the steps of the throne. Upon this throne is their palladium, which they guard more vigilantly and apprehensively than the Trojans guarded theirs. This palladium, which makes them all-powerful, rich, and insolent, is royalty. This royalty cannot be reached save by passing over the bodies of those who guard it, as one can reach the general only by overthrowing the battalions which protect him. Well, history tells us of many battalions which have been captured, many generals who have been overthrown, from Darius down to King John, from Regulus down to Duguesclin.

"If we overthrow the guard, we reach the idol. Let us begin by striking down the sentinels, — we can afterward strike down the chief. Let the attack be first on the courtiers, the nobility, the aristocracy; afterward upon the kings. Count the privileged heads; there are scarcely two hundred thousand. Walk through this beautiful garden called France, with a sharp switch in your hand, and cut down these two hundred thousand heads as Tarquin did the poppies of Latium, and all will be done. There will then be only two powers opposed to each other, — the people and the kingship. Then let this kingship, this symbol, try to struggle with the people, this giant, — and you will see! When dwarfs wish to overthrow a colossus, they begin with the pedestal. When the woodmen wish to cut down the oak, they attack it at the foot. Woodmen!

woodmen! seize the hatchet, attack the oak at its roots, and the ancient tree with its proud branches will soon bite the dust!"

"And will crush you like pygmies in its fall, unhappy schemers that you are!" exclaimed Balsamo, in a voice of thunder. "Ah! you rail against the poets, and you speak in metaphors even more poetical and more imaginative than theirs! Brother! brother!" continued he, addressing Marat, "I tell you, you have quoted these sentences from some romance which you are composing in your garret!"

Marat reddened.

"Do you know what a revolution is?" continued Balsamo; "I have seen two hundred, and can tell you. I have seen that of ancient Egypt, that of Assyria, those of Rome and Greece, and that of the Netherlands. I have seen those of the Middle Ages, when the nations rushed one against another, — East against West, West against East, — and murdered without knowing why. From the Shepherd Kings to our own time there have been perhaps a hundred revolutions, and yet now you complain of being slaves. Revolutions, then, have done no good. And why? Because those who caused the revolutions were all struck with the same vertigo, — they were too hasty. Does God, who presides over the revolutions of the world, as genius presides over the revolutions of men, — does he hasten?

"'Cut down the oak!' you cry; and you do not calculate that the oak, which needs but a second to fall, covers as much ground when it falls as a horse at a gallop would cross in thirty seconds. Now, those who throw down the oak, not having time to avoid the unforeseen fall, will be lost, crushed, killed, beneath its immense trunk. That is what you want, is it not? You will never get that from

me. Like God, I have lived through twenty, thirty, forty, generations of human life. Like God, I am eternal. Like God, I shall be patient. I carry my fate, yours, the world's, in the hollow of this hand. No one can make me open this hand, full of overwhelming truth, unless I wish to open it. There is thunder in it, I know. Well! the thunderbolt shall remain in it, as if hidden in the murky cloud. Brothers! brothers! descend from these sublime heights, and let us once more walk upon the earth.

"I tell you plainly, and with sincere conviction, that the time has not yet come. The king who is on the throne is the last reflection of the great monarch whom the people still venerate; and in this fading monarchy there is yet something dazzling enough to outweigh the lightning shafts of your petty anger. This man was born a king, and will die a king. His race is insolent, but pure. You can read his origin on his brow, in his gestures, in his voice, — he will always be king. Overthrow him, and that will happen to him which happened to Charles the First; his executioners will kneel before him, and the courtiers who accompany him in his misfortune will, like Lord Capel, kiss the axe which has struck off the head of their master.

"Now, brothers, you all know that England was too hasty. King Charles the First died upon the scaffold, indeed; but King Charles the Second, his son, died upon the throne.

"Wait, wait, brothers! for the time will soon be propitious. You wish to destroy the lilies. That is our motto, — 'Lilia pedibus destrue.' But not a single root must leave to the flower of Saint Louis the hope of blooming again. You wish to destroy royalty? To destroy royalty forever, you must weaken her *prestige* as well as her essence. You wish to destroy royalty? Wait till

royalty is no longer a sacred office, but merely a trade, — till it is practised in a shop, not in a temple. Now, what is most sacred in royalty — namely, the legitimate transmission of the throne, authorized for centuries by God and the people — is about to be lost forever. Listen, listen! This invincible, this impervious barrier between us nothings and these quasi divine creatures; this limit which the people have never dared to cross, and which is called legitimacy; this word, brilliant as a lighted watch-tower, and which until now has saved the royal family from shipwreck, — this word will be extinguished by the breath of a mysterious fatality!

"The dauphiness, called to France to perpetuate the race of kings by the admixture of imperial blood, — the dauphiness, married now for a year to the heir of the French crown, — approach, brothers, for I fear to let the sound of my words pass beyond your circle —"

"Well?" asked the six chiefs, with anxiety.

"Well, brothers, the marriage of the dauphiness is still not fully consummated."

A sinister murmur, which would have frozen the monarchs of the world with terror had they heard it, — such deep hatred, such revengeful joy did it breathe, — escaped like a deadly vapor from the little circle of six heads, which almost touched each other, Balsamo's being bent over them from his rostrum.

"In this condition of affairs," continued Balsamo, "two possibilities are presented, equally profitable to our cause.

"The first possibility is that the dauphiness will continue childless, that then the race will be extinguished, and the future will have for our friends neither wars, difficulties, nor troubles. That will happen to this family, foredoomed to perish, which has always happened in France when three brothers have succeeded to the throne;

which happened to the sons of Philippe le Bel, — Louis le Hutin, Philippe le Long, and Charles IV., — who all reigned and died leaving no issue; which happened to the three sons of Henri II., — François II., Charles IX., and Henri III., — who all reigned, and died without issue. Like these, Monseigneur le Dauphin, Monseigneur le Comte de Provence, and Monseigneur le Comte d'Artois will all reign, and will die leaving no children, as died these others, — it is the law of destiny. Then, as after Charles IV., the last king of the house of Capet, came Philippe VI. de Valois, of a family collateral to that of the kings preceding; as, after Henri III., the last king of the house of Valois, came Henri IV. de Bourbon, of a family collateral to that which preceded, — after the Comte d'Artois, whose name is written in the book of fate as that of the last king of the elder branch, will come perhaps some Cromwell or some William of Orange, — some stranger to the race or to the natural order of succession.

"This is what the first possibility offers us. The second is that the dauphiness will not continue childless. And here is the trap into which our enemies will throw themselves, while expecting us to be caught in it. Oh! if the dauphiness does not continue childless, if she becomes a mother, then, while all the court will rejoice, and will believe that royalty is more firmly established in France, we ourselves shall rejoice also; for we shall possess a secret so terrible that no prestige, no power, no efforts can make head against the crimes which that secret will involve, and the unhappiness which that maternity will bring upon the future queen. The heir she will give to the throne we shall easily show to be illegitimate, for we shall easily prove that maternity to be adulterous. So that, in comparison with that factitious good fortune which Heaven will seem to have granted them, barrenness would have

been a blessing from on high. This is why I refrain, gentlemen; this is why I wait, brothers; in short, this is why I consider it useless to unchain to-day the passions of the people, which I shall employ effectively when the fit time shall arrive.

"Now, gentlemen, you know this year's work; you see the progress of our mines. Be assured that we shall succeed only by the genius and the courage of some, who will serve as the eyes and the brain; by the perseverance and labor of others, who will represent the arms; by the faith and the devotion of others again, who will be the heart. Above all, remember the necessity of a blind submission, which ordains that even your chief must sacrifice himself to the statutes of the order, whenever those statutes require it.

"After this, gentlemen and beloved brothers, I would dissolve the meeting, if there were not still a good act to perform, an evil to point out. The great writer who came among us this evening, and who would have been one of us but for the stormy zeal of one of our brothers who alarmed his timid soul, — this great author proved himself in the right before our assembly; and I deplore it as a misfortune that a stranger should be victorious in the presence of a majority of brothers who are imperfectly acquainted with our rules, and utterly ignorant of our aim.

"Rousseau, triumphing over the truths of our association with the sophisms of his books, represents a fundamental vice which I would extirpate by steel and fire, if I had not the hope of curing it by persuasion. The self-love of one of our brothers has exhibited itself with mischievous results. He has led us to defeat in the discussion. No such manifestation, I trust, will again be made; and if it is, I shall have recourse to the laws of discipline.

"In the mean time, gentlemen, propagate the faith by gentleness and persuasion. Insinuate it, do not impose it; do not force it into rebellious minds with wedges and blows, as the inquisitors tortured their victims. Remember that we cannot be great until after we have been acknowledged good; and that we cannot be acknowledged good but by appearing better than those who surround us. Remember, too, that among us the great, the good, the best, are nothing without science, art, and faith; nothing, in short, compared with those whom God has marked with a peculiar stamp, to give them authority to govern men and rule empires.

"Gentlemen, the meeting is dissolved."

After pronouncing these words, Balsamo put on his hat and folded himself in his cloak.

Each of the initiated left in his turn, alone and silently, in order not to awaken suspicion.

CHAPTER V.

THE BODY AND THE SOUL.

The last who remained beside the master was Marat, the surgeon. He was very pale, and humbly approached the terrible orator of unlimited power.

"Master," said he, "have I indeed committed a fault?"

"A great one, Monsieur," said Balsamo: "and, what is worse, you do not believe that you have committed one."

"Well, yes, I confess that not only do I not believe that I committed a fault, but I think that I spoke as I ought to speak."

"Pride, pride!" muttered Balsamo; "pride, — destructive demon! Men combat the fever in the blood of the patient, they dispel the plague from the water and the air; but they let pride strike such deep roots in their hearts that they cannot exterminate it."

"Oh, Master," said Marat, "you have a very despicable opinion of me! Am I indeed so worthless that I cannot count for anything among my fellows? Have I gathered the fruits of my labor so ill that I cannot utter a word without being taxed with ignorance? Am I such a lukewarm member that my earnestness is suspected? If I have no other good quality, I have at least that of living in devotion to the holy cause of the people."

"Monsieur," replied Balsamo, "it is because the principle of good yet struggles in you against the principle of evil, which appears to me likely to carry you away one day, that I will try to correct these defects in you. If I

can succeed — if pride has not yet subdued every other sentiment in your breast — I shall succeed in one hour."

"In one hour?" said Marat.

"Yes; will you grant me that time?"

"Certainly."

"Where shall I see you?"

"Master, it is my place to seek you in any place you may choose to point out to your servant."

"Well," said Balsamo, "I will come to your house."

"Mark the promise you are making, Master. I live in an attic in the Rue des Cordeliers. An attic, remember!" said Marat, with an affectation of proud simplicity, with a boasting display of poverty, which did not escape Balsamo, "while you — "

"Well, while I?"

"While you, it is said, inhabit a palace."

Balsamo shrugged his shoulders, like a giant who looks down with contempt on the anger of a dwarf. "Well, even so, Monsieur," he replied; "I will come to see you in your garret."

"And when, Monsieur?"

"To-morrow."

"At what time?"

"In the morning."

"At daybreak I go to my lecture-room, and from thence to the hospital."

"That is precisely what I want. I would have asked you to take me with you, had you not proposed it."

"But early, remember," said Marat; "I sleep little."

"And I do not sleep at all," replied Balsamo. "At daybreak, then."

"I shall expect you."

Thereupon they separated, for they had reached the

door opening on the street, now as dark and solitary as it had been noisy and populous when they entered. Balsamo turned to the left, and rapidly disappeared. Marat followed his example, striding toward the right with his long, meagre limbs.

Balsamo was punctual. The next morning at six o'clock he knocked at the door of a long corridor, which, with the six rooms opening into it, formed the upper story of an old house in the Rue des Cordeliers.

It was evident that Marat had made great preparations to receive his illustrious guest. The small bed of walnut-tree, and the wooden chest of drawers beside it, shone bright beneath the sturdy arm of the charwoman, who was busily engaged scrubbing the decayed furniture.

Marat himself lent a helping hand to the old woman, and was refreshing the withered flowers which were arranged in a blue delft pot, and which formed the principal ornament of the attic. He still held a dusting-cloth under his arm, which showed that he had not touched the flowers until he had given a rub to the furniture.

As the key was in the door, and as Balsamo had entered without knocking, he interrupted Marat in his occupation. Marat, at the sight of the master, blushed much more deeply than was becoming in a true stoic. "You see, Master," said he, stealthily throwing the tell-tale cloth behind a curtain, "I am a domestic man, and assist this good woman. It is from preference that I choose this task, which is, perhaps, not quite plebeian, but it is still less aristocratic."

"It is that of a poor young man who loves cleanliness," said Balsamo, coldly, "nothing more. Are you ready, Monsieur? You know my moments are precious."

"I have only to slip on my coat, Monsieur. Dame Grivette, my coat! She is my portress, Monsieur, — my

footman, my cook, my housekeeper, and she costs me one crown a month."

"Economy is praiseworthy," said Balsamo; "it is the wealth of the poor, and the wisdom of the rich."

"My hat and cane," said Marat.

"Stretch out your hand," said Balsamo; "there is your hat, and no doubt this cane which is near your hat is yours."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, Monsieur; I am quite confused."

"Are you ready?"

"Yes, Monsieur. My watch, Dame Grivette!"

Dame Grivette bustled about the room as if in search of something, but did not reply.

"You have no occasion for a watch, Monsieur, to go to the lecture-room and the hospital; it will perhaps not be easily found, and that would cause some delay."

"But Monsieur, I attach great value to my watch, which is an excellent one, and which I bought with my savings."

"In your absence, Dame Grivette will look for it," replied Balsamo, with a smile; "and if she searches carefully, it will be found when you return."

"Oh, certainly!" said Dame Grivette, "it will be found, unless Monsieur has left it somewhere else. Nothing is lost here."

"You see," said Balsamo. "Come, Monsieur, come!"

Marat did not venture to persist, and followed Balsamo, grumbling. When they reached the door, Balsamo said, "Where shall we go first?"

"To the lecture-room, if you please, Master; I have marked a subject which must have died last night of acute meningitis. I want to make some observations on his brain, and I do not wish my colleagues to take it from me."

"Then let us go to the lecture-room, Monsieur Marat."

"Moreover, it is only a few yards from here; the lecture-room is close to the hospital, and we shall need only to go in and come out again, — you might even wait for me at the door."

"On the contrary, I wish to accompany you inside; you will give me your opinion on this subject."

"When he was alive, Monsieur?"

"No, since he has become a corpse."

"Take care," said Marat, smiling; "I may gain a point over you, for I am well acquainted with this part of my profession, and am said to be a skilful anatomist."

"Pride! pride! ever pride!" murmured Balsamo.

"What do you say?" asked Marat.

"I say that we shall see, Monsieur," replied Balsamo. "Let us enter."

Marat preceded Balsamo in the narrow alley leading to the lecture-room, which was situated at the extremity of the Rue Hautefeuille. Balsamo followed him unhesitatingly until they reached a long narrow room, where two corpses, a male and a female, lay stretched upon a marble table.

The woman had died young; the man was old and bald. A soiled sheet was thrown over their bodies, leaving their faces half-uncovered. They were lying side by side upon this cold bed, —they who had perhaps never met before in the world, and whose souls, then voyaging in eternity, must, could they have looked down on earth, have been struck with astonishment at the proximity of their mortal remains.

Marat with a single movement raised and threw aside the coarse linen which covered the two bodies, whom death had thus made equal before the anatomist's scalpel.

"Is not the sight of the dead repugnant to your feelings?" asked Marat, in his usual boasting manner.

"It makes me sad," replied Balsamo.

"Want of custom," said Marat. "I, who see this sight daily, feel neither sadness nor disgust. We practitioners live with the dead, and do not interrupt any of the functions of our existence on their account."

"It is a sad privilege of your profession, Monsieur."

"Besides," added Marat, "why should I be sad, or feel disgust? In the first case, reflection forbids it; in the second, custom."

"Explain your ideas," said Balsamo; "I do not understand you clearly. Reflection first."

"Well, why should I be afraid? Why should I fear an inert mass, — a statue of flesh instead of stone, marble, or granite?"

"In short, you think there is nothing in a corpse?"

"Nothing, — absolutely nothing."

"Do you believe that?"

"I am sure of it."

"But in the living body."

"There is motion," said Marat, proudly.

"And the soul, — you do not speak of it, Monsieur."

"I have never found it in the bodies which I have dissected."

"Because you have dissected only corpses."

"Oh, no, Monsieur! I have frequently operated upon living bodies."

"And you have found nothing more in them than in the corpses?"

"Yes, I have found pain. Do you call pain the soul?"

"Then you do not believe in it?"

"In what?"

"In the soul."

"I believe in it, because I am at liberty to call it motion, if I wish."

"That is well. You believe in the soul; that is all I asked. I am glad you believe in it."

"One moment, Master. Let us understand each other, and above all, let us not exaggerate," said Marat, with his serpent smile. "We practitioners are rather disposed to materialism."

"These bodies are very cold," said Balsamo, dreamily, "and this woman was very beautiful."

"Why, yes."

"A lovely soul would have been suitable in this lovely body."

"Ah! there was the mistake of him who created her. A beautiful scabbard, but a vile sword. This corpse, Master, is that of a wretched woman who had just left Saint Lazare when she died of cerebral inflammation in the Hôtel Dieu. Her history is long, and tolerably scandalous. If you call the motive power which impelled this creature 'soul,' you wrong our souls, which must be of the same essence, since they are derived from the same source."

"Her soul should have been cured," said Balsamo; "it was lost for want of the only physician who is indispensable, — a physician of the soul."

"Alas, Master, that is another of your theories! There are only physicians for the body," replied Marat, with a bitter smile. "Now you have a word on your lips which Molière has often employed in his comedies; and it is this word which makes you smile."

"No," said Balsamo, "you mistake; you cannot know why I smile. What we concluded just now was that these corpses are void, was it not?"

"And insensible," added Marat, raising the young woman's head, and letting it fall noisily upon the marble, while the body neither moved nor shuddered.

"Very well," said Balsamo; "let us now go to the hospital."

"Wait one moment, Master, I entreat you, until I have separated from the trunk this head, which I am most anxious to have, as it was the seat of a very strange disease. Will you allow me?"

"Do you ask?" said Balsamo.

Marat opened his case, took from it a bistoury, and picked up in a corner a large wooden mallet stained with blood. Then with a practised hand he made a circular incision, which separated all the flesh and the muscles of the neck; and having thus reached the bone, he slipped his bistoury between two joints of the vertebral column, and struck a sharp blow upon it with the mallet.

The head rolled upon the table, and from the table upon the floor. Marat was obliged to seize it with his damp hands. Balsamo turned away, not to give too much joy to the triumphant operator.

"One day," said Marat, who thought he had hit the master in a weak point, — "one day some philanthropist will occupy himself with the details of death as others do with those of life, and will invent a machine which shall sever a head at a single blow, and cause instantaneous annihilation, which no other instrument of death does. The wheel, quartering, and hanging, are punishments suitable for savages, but not for civilized people. An enlightened nation like France should punish, but not revenge. Those who condemn to the wheel, who hang or quarter, revenge themselves upon the criminal by inflicting pain before punishing him by death; and that, in my opinion, is too much by half."

"And in mine also, Monsieur. But what kind of an instrument do you mean?"

"I can fancy a machine cold and impassive as the law itself. The man who is charged with fulfilling the last office is moved at the sight of his fellow-man, and sometimes strikes badly, as in the case of the Duke of Monmouth and that of Chalais. This could not happen with a machine having, for instance, two arms of oak wielding a cutlass."

"And do you believe, Monsieur, that because the knife would pass with the rapidity of lightning between the base of the occiput and the trapezoid muscles, death would be instantaneous and the pain momentary?"

"Certainly; death would be instantaneous, for the iron would sever at a blow the nerves which cause motion. The pain would be momentary, for the blade would separate the brain, which is the seat of feeling, from the heart, which is the centre of life."

"Monsieur," said Balsamo, "the punishment of decapitation exists in Germany."

"Yes, but by the sword; and, as I said before, a man's hand may tremble."

"Such a machine exists in Italy; an arm of oak wields it. It is called the *mannaja*."

"Well?"

"Well, Monsieur, I have seen criminals decapitated by the executioner raise their headless bodies from the bench on which they were seated, and stagger off, to fall ten steps from there. I have picked up heads which had rolled to the foot of the *mannaja*, — as that head you are holding by the hair has just rolled from the marble table, — and on pronouncing in their ears the name by which those persons had been called, I have seen the eyes open again and turn in their orbits, seeking to discover who

from the earth had called to them in that passage from time to eternity."

"A nervous movement, — nothing else."

"Are the nerves not the organs of sensibility?"

"What do you conclude from that, Monsieur?"

"I conclude that it would be better, instead of inventing a machine which kills in order to punish, that man should seek a means of punishing without killing. The society which will invent this means will assuredly be the best and the most enlightened of societies."

"Utopia again, — always Utopia!" said Marat.

"Perhaps you are right," said Balsamo; "time will show. But did you not speak of the hospital? Let us go!"

"Come, then," said Marat; and he tied the woman's head in his pocket-handkerchief, carefully knotting the four corners. "Now I am sure, at least," said he, as he left the hall, "that my comrades will have only my leavings."

They took the way to the Hôtel Dieu, — the dreamer and the practitioner side by side.

"You have cut off this head very coolly and very skilfully, Monsieur," said Balsamo. "Do you feel less emotion when you operate upon the living than the dead? Does the sight of suffering affect you more than that of immobility? Have you more pity for living bodies than for corpses?"

"No; that would be as great a fault as for the executioner to be moved. You may kill a man by cutting his thigh unskilfully, just as well as by severing the head from the body. A good surgeon operates with his hand, not with his heart; though he knows well at the same time, in his heart, that for one moment of suffering he gives years of life and health. That is the fair side of our profession, Master."

"Yes, Monsieur; but in the living bodies you meet with the soul, I hope."

"Yes, if you will agree with me that the soul is motion, or sensibility. Yes, certainly, I meet with it; and it is very troublesome too, for it kills far more patients than any scalpel."

They had by this time arrived at the threshold of the Hôtel Dieu, and now entered the hospital. Guided by Marat, who still carried his funereal burden, Balsamo penetrated to the hall where the operations were performed, in which the head-surgeon and the students in surgery were assembled. The attendant had just brought in a young man who had been run over the preceding week by a heavy carriage, the wheel of which had crushed his foot. A hasty operation performed upon the limb when benumbed by pain had not been sufficient; the inflammation had rapidly extended, and the amputation of the leg had now become an urgent necessity.

The unfortunate man, stretched upon his bed of anguish, looked, with a horror which would have melted tigers, at the band of eager students who were watching for the moment of his martyrdom, perhaps of his death, that they might study the science of life, — that marvellous phenomenon behind which lies the gloomy phenomenon of death.

He seemed to implore a pitying look, a smile, or a word of encouragement from each of the students and attendants; but the beatings of his heart were responded to only by indifference, his beseeching looks encountered only steel. A remnant of courage and of pride kept him silent. He reserved all his strength for the cries which pain would soon wring from him. But when he felt the heavy hand of the attendant upon his shoulder, when the arms of the assistants twined around him like

the serpents of Laocoön, when he heard the operator's voice cry, "Courage!" the unfortunate man ventured to break the silence, and asked in a plaintive voice, "Shall I suffer much?"

"Oh, no! make your mind easy," replied Marat, with a hypocritical smile, which to the patient seemed kind, but to Balsamo ironical.

Marat saw that Balsamo had understood him; he approached and whispered: "It is a dreadful operation. The bone is full of cracks, and fearfully sensitive. He will die, not of the wound, but of the pain. That is what the soul does for this poor man."

"Then why do you operate? Why do you not let him die in peace?"

"Because it is the surgeon's duty to attempt a cure, even when the cure seems impossible."

"And you say he will suffer?"

"Fearfully."

"And that his soul is the cause?"

"His soul, which has too much sympathy with the body."

"Then why not operate upon the soul? Perhaps the tranquillity of the one would cause the cure of the other."

"I have done so," said Marat, while the attendants continued to bind the patient.

"You have prepared his soul?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"As one always does,—by words. I spoke to his soul, his intelligence, his sensibility,—to that organ which caused the Greek philosopher to exclaim, 'Pain, thou art no evil,'—the language suitable for it. I said to him: 'You will not suffer.' That is the only remedy hitherto

known, as regards the soul, — falsehood! Why is this she-devil of a soul connected with the body? When I cut off this head just now, the body said nothing, yet the operation was a serious one. But motion had ceased, sensibility was extinguished, the soul had fled, as you spiritualists say. This is the reason why the head I severed said nothing, why the body which I mutilated allowed me to do so; while this body which is yet inhabited by a soul — for a short time indeed, but still inhabited — will cry out fearfully. Stop your ears well, Master, you who are moved by this union of body and soul, which will always defeat your theory until you succeed in isolating the body from the soul."

"And you believe we shall never arrive at this isolation?"

"Try," said Marat; "this is an excellent opportunity."

"Well, yes, you are right," said Balsamo; "the opportunity is a good one, and I will make the attempt."

"You will make the attempt?"

"I will."

"How will you do it?"

"This young man interests me; he shall not suffer."

"You are an illustrious chief," said Marat, "but you are neither God the Father, nor God the Son, and you cannot prevent this man from suffering."

"If he were not to feel the pain, do you think he would recover?"

"His recovery would be more probable, but not certain."

Balsamo cast an inexpressible look of triumph upon Marat, and placed himself before the young patient, whose frightened eyes, already dilated with the anguish of terror, met his.

"Sleep," said Balsamo, not alone with his lips, but

with his look, with his will, with all the heat of his blood, all the vital energy of his body.

The head-surgeon was just beginning to feel the injured leg, and to point out the aggravated nature of the case to his students; but at Balsamo's command the young man, who had raised himself upon his seat, oscillated for a moment in the arms of his attendants, his head drooped, and his eyes closed.

"He is ill," said Marat.

"No, Monsieur."

"But do you not see that he loses consciousness?"

"He is sleeping."

"What, he sleeps?"

"Yes."

Every one turned to look at the strange physician, whom they took for a madman. An incredulous smile hovered on Marat's lips.

"Is it usual for people to talk while in a swoon?" asked Balsamo.

"No."

"Well, question him, — he will reply."

"Eh! young man!" cried Marat.

"You need not speak so loud," said Balsamo; "speak in your usual tone."

"Tell us what is the matter with you."

"I was ordered to sleep, and I sleep," replied the patient.

His voice was perfectly calm, and contrasted strangely with that they had heard a few moments before. All the attendants looked at each other.

"Now," said Balsamo, "release him."

"That is impossible," said the head-surgeon; "the slightest movement will spoil the operation."

"He will not stir."

"Who can assure me of that?"

"I, and he also, — ask him."

"Can you be left untied, my friend?"

"Yes."

"And will you promise not to move?"

"I will promise it, if you command me."

"I command it."

"Faith! Monsieur, you speak so positively that I am tempted to make the trial."

"Do so, Monsieur; and fear nothing."

"Untie him."

The assistants obeyed. Balsamo advanced to the bedside. "From this moment," said he, "do not stir until I order you."

A statue upon a tombstone could not have been more motionless than the patient, upon this injunction.

"Now operate, Monsieur," said Balsamo; "the patient is quite ready."

The surgeon took his bistoury; but when upon the point of using it, he hesitated.

"Cut, Monsieur! cut, I tell you!" said Balsamo, with the air of an inspired prophet.

And the surgeon, yielding — like Marat, like the patient, like every one present — to the irresistible influence of Balsamo's words, made ready to begin. The sound of the knife passing through the flesh was heard, but the patient did not stir, nor even sigh.

"From what country do you come, my friend?" asked Balsamo.

"I am a Breton, Monsieur," replied the patient, smiling.

"And you love your country?"

"Oh, Monsieur, it is so beautiful!"

In the mean time the surgeon was making the circular

incisions in the flesh, by means of which, in amputations, the bone is laid bare.

"You left it when young?" asked Balsamo.

"At ten years of age, Monsieur."

The incisions were made; the surgeon placed the saw on the bone.

"My friend," said Balsamo, "sing me that song which the salt-makers of Batz chant as they return to their homes after the day's work is over. I can remember only the first line, —

> "'My salt covered o'er with its mantle of foam.'"

The saw was now severing the bone; but at Balsamo's command the patient smiled, and began to sing in a low, melodious, ecstatic voice, like a lover or like a poet, the following verses: —

> "My salt covered o'er with its mantle of foam,
> The lake of pure azure that mirrors my home,
> My stove where the peats ever cheerfully burn,
> And the honeyed wheat-cake which awaits my return;
>
> "The wife of my bosom, my silver-haired sire,
> My urchins who sport round the clear evening fire;
> And there, where the wild flowers, in brightest of bloom,
> Their fragrance diffuse round my loved mother's tomb, —
>
> "Blest, blest be ye all! Now the day's task is o'er,
> And I stand once again at my own cottage door;
> And richly will love my brief absence repay,
> And the calm joys of eve the rude toils of the day."

The leg fell upon the bed while the patient was still singing.

CHAPTER VI.

BODY AND SOUL.

Every one looked with astonishment at the patient,—with admiration at the physician. Some said that both were mad. Marat communicated this opinion to Balsamo in a whisper. "Terror has made the poor devil lose his senses," said he; "that is why he feels no pain."

"I think not," replied Balsamo; "and far from having lost his senses, I am sure that if I asked him, he could tell us the day of his death if he is to die, or the period of his convalescence if he is to recover."

Marat was almost inclined to adopt the general opinion,—that Balsamo was as mad as his patient. In the mean time, however, the surgeon was tying up the arteries, from which spouted streams of blood.

Balsamo drew a small phial from his pocket, poured a few drops of the liquid it contained upon a little ball of lint, and begged the chief surgeon to apply the lint to the arteries. The latter obeyed, with a certain feeling of curiosity. He was one of the most celebrated practitioners of that period,—a man truly enamoured of his profession, who repudiated none of its mysteries, and for whom chance was but the makeshift of ignorance.

He applied the lint to the artery, which quivered, bubbled, and then allowed the blood to escape only drop by drop. He could now tie up the artery with the greatest ease.

This time Balsamo obtained an undoubted triumph, and all present asked him where he had studied, and of what school he was.

"I am a German physician of the school of Göttingen," he replied, "and I have made this discovery you have just witnessed. However, gentlemen and fellow-practitioners, I wish this discovery to remain a secret for the present, as I have a wholesome terror of the stake, and the parliament of Paris might perhaps resume their functions once more, for the pleasure of condemning a sorcerer to be burned."

The head-surgeon was still plunged in a revery. Marat also seemed thoughtful, but he was the first to break the silence. "You said just now," said he, "that if you were to question this man about the result of this operation, he would reply truly, though the result is still veiled in futurity."

"I assert it again," replied Balsamo.

"Well, let us have the proof."

"What is this poor fellow's name?"

"Havard," replied Marat.

Balsamo turned to the patient, whose lips were yet murmuring the last words of the plaintive air.

"Well, my friend," asked he, "what do you augur from the state of this poor Havard?"

"What do I augur from his state?" replied the patient. "Stay! I must return from Brittany, where I was, to the Hôtel Dieu, where he is."

"Just so. Enter, look at him, and tell me the truth respecting him."

"Oh! he is very ill; his leg has been cut off."

"Indeed!" said Balsamo. "And has the operation been successful?"

"Exceedingly so; but —"

The patient's face darkened.

"But what?" asked Balsamo.

"But," resumed the patient, "he has a terrible trial to pass through. The fever —"

"When will it come on?"

"At seven o'clock this evening."

All the spectators looked at each other.

"And this fever?" asked Balsamo.

"Oh! it will make him very ill; but he will recover from the first attack."

"Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then, after this first attack, will he be saved?"

"Alas! no," said the wounded man, sighing.

"Will the fever return, then?"

"Oh, yes! and more severely than before. Poor Havard! poor Havard!" he continued, "he has a wife and several children;" and his eyes filled with tears.

"Must his wife be a widow, then, and his children orphans?" asked Balsamo.

"Wait, wait!"

He clasped his hands.

"No, no," he exclaimed, his features lighting up with an expression of sublime faith; "no, his wife and children have prayed so much that they have obtained God's mercy for him."

"Then he will recover?"

"Yes."

"You hear, gentlemen," said Balsamo; "he will recover."

"Ask him in how many days," said Marat.

"In how many days, do you say?"

"Yes; you said he could indicate the phases, and the duration of his convalescence."

"I ask nothing better than to question him on the subject."

"Well, then, question him now."

"And when do you think Havard will recover?" said Balsamo.

"Oh! his cure will take a long time, — a month, six weeks, two months. He entered this hospital five days ago, and he will leave it two months and two weeks after having entered."

"And he will leave it cured?"

"Yes."

"But," said Marat, "unable to work, and consequently unable to maintain his wife and children."

Havard again clasped his hands. "Oh! God is good; God will provide for him!"

"And how will God provide for him?" asked Marat. "As I am in the way of learning to-day, I should much like to learn that."

"God has sent to his bedside a charitable man, who has taken pity upon him, and who has said to himself, 'poor Havard shall not want.'"

The spectators were amazed; Balsamo smiled.

"This is in truth a strange scene," said the head-surgeon, at the same time taking the patient's hand, and feeling his chest and forehead; "this man is dreaming."

"Do you think so?" said Balsamo.

Then darting upon the sick man a look of authority and energy, "Awake, Havard!" said he.

The young man opened his eyes with some difficulty, and gazed with profound surprise upon all these spectators, who had so soon laid aside their threatening attitude, and assumed an inoffensive manner toward him.

"Well," said he, sadly, "have you not operated yet? Are you still going to make me suffer?"

Balsamo was quick to make the reply, for he feared the invalid's emotion. But there was no need for such haste; the surprise of all the spectators was so great that none would have anticipated him.

"My friend," said he, "be calm. The head-surgeon has operated upon your leg in such a manner as to satisfy all the requirements of your condition. It seems, my poor fellow, that you are not very strong-minded, for you fainted at the first incision."

"Oh! so much the better," said the Breton, smilingly; "I felt nothing, and my sleep was even sweet and refreshing. What happiness, — my leg will not be cut off!"

But just at that moment the poor man looked down, and saw the bed full of blood, and his amputated leg lying near him. He uttered a scream, and this time fainted in reality.

"Now question him," said Balsamo, coldly, to Marat; "you will see if he replies."

Then, taking the head-surgeon aside, while the nurses carried the poor young man back to his bed, "Monsieur," said Balsamo, "you heard what your poor patient said?"

"Yes, Monsieur, that he would recover."

"He said something else; he said that God would take pity upon him, and would send him wherewithal to support his wife and children."

"Well?"

"Well, Monsieur, he told the truth on this point, as on the others. Only you must undertake to be the charitable medium of affording him this assistance. Here is a diamond, worth about twenty thousand francs; when the poor man is cured, sell it, and give him the proceeds. In the mean time, since the soul, as your pupil Monsieur Marat said very truly, has a great influence upon the body, tell Havard, as soon as he is restored to

consciousness, that his future comfort and that of his children is secured."

"But, Monsieur," said the surgeon, hesitating to take the ring which Balsamo offered him, "if he should not recover?"

"He will recover."

"Then allow me at least to give you a receipt."

"Monsieur!"

"That is the only condition upon which I can receive a jewel of such value."

"Do as you think right, Monsieur."

"Your name, if you please?"

"The Comte de Fenix."

The surgeon passed into the adjoining apartment, while Marat, overwhelmed, confounded, but still struggling against the evidence of his senses, approached Balsamo.

In five minutes the surgeon returned, holding in his hand the following receipt, which he gave Balsamo:

I have received from the Comte de Fenix a diamond, which he affirms to be worth twenty thousand francs, the value of which is to be given to the man Havard when he leaves the Hôtel Dieu.

This 15th of September, 1771.

GUILLOTIN, M.D.

Balsamo bowed to the doctor, took the receipt, and left the room, followed by Marat.

"You are forgetting your head," said Balsamo, for whom the wandering of the young student's thoughts was a great triumph.

"Ah, true!" said he; and he again picked up his dismal burden.

When they emerged into the street, both walked forward very quickly, without uttering a word; then, having

reached the Rue des Cordeliers, they ascended the steep stairs which led to the attic.

Marat, who had not forgotten the disappearance of his watch, stopped before the lodge of the portress, — if the den which she inhabited may be called by that name, — and asked for Dame Grivette.

A thin, stunted, miserable-looking child, about seven years old, replied, in a whining voice: "Mamma is gone out; she said that when you came home I was to give you this letter."

"No, no, my little friend," said Marat; "tell her to bring it me herself."

"Yes, Monsieur."

And Marat and Balsamo proceeded on their way.

"Ah!" said Marat, pointing out a chair to Balsamo, and falling upon a stool himself, "I see the master has some fine secrets."

"It is because I have entered further than most men into the confidence of Nature and of God," replied Balsamo.

"Oh!" said Marat, "how science proves man's omnipotence, and how proud one should be that he is a man!"

"True, — and a physician, you should have added."

"Therefore I am proud of you, Master," said Marat.

"And yet," replied Balsamo, smiling, "I am but a poor physician of souls."

"Oh! do not say that, Monsieur, — you, who stopped the patient's bleeding by material means."

"I thought my best cure was that of having prevented him from suffering. True, you assured me he was mad."

"He was so for a moment, certainly."

"What do you call madness? Is it not an abstraction of the soul?"

"Or of the mind," said Marat.

"We will not discuss the point. The soul serves me as a term for what I mean. When the object is found, it matters little how you call it."

"There is where we differ, Monsieur. You pretend you have found the thing, and seek only the name; I maintain that you seek both the object and the name."

"We will return to that immediately. You said, then, that madness was a temporary abstraction of the mind?"

"Certainly."

"Involuntary, is it not?"

"Yes; I have seen a madman at Bicêtre, who bit the iron bars of his cell, crying out all the time, 'Cook, your pheasants are very tender, but they are badly dressed.'"

"But you admit, at least, that this madness passes over the mind like a cloud, and that when it has passed, the mind resumes its former brightness?"

"That scarcely ever happens."

"Yet you saw our patient recover his senses perfectly after his insane dream."

"I saw it, but I did not understand what I saw. It is an exceptional case, — one of those strange events which the Israelites called miracles."

"No, Monsieur," said Balsamo; "it is simply the abstraction of the soul, the twofold isolation of spirit and matter, — of matter, a thing inert, dust, which will return to dust; and soul, the divine spark which was enclosed for a short period in that dark lantern called the body, and which, being the child of heaven, will return to heaven after the body has sunk to earth."

"Then you abstracted the soul momentarily from the body?"

"Yes, Monsieur; I commanded it to quit the miserable abode which it occupied. I raised it from the abyss of suffering in which pain had bound it, and transported it

into pure and heavenly regions. What, then, remained for the surgeon? That which remained for your dissecting knife, when you severed from the dead body that head you are carrying, — nothing but inert flesh, matter, clay."

"And in whose name did you command the soul?"

"In his name who created all souls by his breath, — the souls of worlds, the souls of men, — in the name of God."

"Then," said Marat, "you deny free-will?"

"I!" said Balsamo; "on the contrary, what am I doing at this moment? I show you, on the one hand, free-will; on the other, abstraction. I show you a dying man, a prey to excruciating pain; this man has a stoical soul, he anticipates the operation, he asks for it, he bears it, but he suffers. That is free-will. But when I approach the dying man, — I, the ambassador of God, the prophet, the apostle, — and taking pity upon this man who is my fellow-creature, I abstract, by the powers which the Lord has given me, the soul from the suffering body, this blind, inert, insensible body becomes a spectacle which the soul contemplates with a pitying eye from the height of its celestial sphere. Did you not hear Havard, when speaking of himself, say 'this poor Havard'? He did not say 'myself.' It was because this soul had in truth no longer any connection with the body, — it was already winging its way to heaven."

"But, by this way of reckoning, man is nothing," said Marat; "and I can no longer say to the tyrant, 'You have power over my body, but none over my soul.'"

"Ah! now you pass from truth to sophism; I have already told you, Monsieur, it is your failing. God lends the soul to the body, it is true; but it is no less true that during the time the soul animates this body, there is a

union between the two, an influence of one over the other, — a supremacy of matter over mind, or mind over matter, according as, for some purpose hidden from us, God permits either the body or the soul to be the ruling power. But it is no less true that the soul which animates the beggar is as pure as that which reigns in the bosom of the king. That is the dogma which you, an apostle of equality, ought to preach. Prove the equality of the spiritual essences in these two cases, since you can establish it by the aid of all that is most sacred in the eyes of men, by holy books and traditions, by science and faith. Of what importance is the equality of two substances? With physical equality you do not soar to the throne of God. Just now this poor wounded man, this ignorant child of the people, told you things concerning his illness which none among the doctors would have ventured to say. How was that? It was because his soul, temporarily freed from earthly ties, floated above this world, and saw from on high a mystery which our opaqueness of vision hides from us."

Marat turned his dead head back and forward upon the table, seeking a reply which he could not find. "Yes," muttered he, at last, "yes; there is something supernatural in all this."

"Perfectly natural, on the contrary, Monsieur. Cease to call supernatural what has its origin in the functions fulfilling the destiny of the soul. These functions are natural, although perhaps not known."

"But though unknown to us, Master, these functions cannot surely be a mystery to you. The horse, unknown to the Peruvians, was yet familiar to the Spaniards, who had tamed him."

"It would be presumptuous in me to say, 'I know.' I am more humble, Monsieur; I say, 'I believe.'"

"Well, what do you believe?"

"I believe that the first, the most powerful, of all laws is the law of progress. I believe that God has created nothing without having a beneficent design in view; only, as the duration of this world is uncalculated and incalculable, the progress is slow. Our planet, according to the Scriptures, was sixty centuries old when printing came like an immense beacon-light to illuminate the past and the future. With the advent of printing, obscurity and forgetfulness vanished. Printing is the memory of the world. Well! Gutenberg invented printing, and I have recovered my confidence."

"Ah!" said Marat, ironically, "you will perhaps be able at last to read men's hearts."

"Why not?"

"Then you will open that little window in men's breasts which the ancients so much desired to see?"

"There is no need for that, Monsieur. I shall separate the soul from the body; and the soul — the pure, immaculate daughter of God — will reveal to me all the turpitudes of the mortal covering it is condemned to animate."

"Can you reveal material secrets?"

"Why not?"

"Can you tell me, for instance, who has stolen my watch?"

"You lower science to a base level, Monsieur. But no matter. God's greatness is proved as much by a grain of sand as by the mountain, — by the flesh-worm as by the elephant. Yes, I will tell you who has stolen your watch."

Just then a timid knock was heard at the door. It was Marat's servant, who had returned, and who came, according to the young surgeon's order, to bring the letter.

CHAPTER VII.

MARAT'S PORTRESS.

The door opened, and Dame Grivette entered. This woman, whom we have not before taken the trouble to sketch, because she was one of those characters whom the painter keeps in the background so long as he has no occasion for them, — this woman now advances in the moving picture of this history, and demands her place in the immense picture we have undertaken to unroll before the eyes of our readers, in which, if our genius equalled our good-will, we would introduce all classes of beings, from the beggar to the king, from Caliban to Ariel, from Ariel to God.

We shall now therefore attempt a sketch of Dame Grivette, who steps forth out of the shade, and advances toward us. She was a tall, withered creature, from thirty to thirty-five years of age, with dark sallow complexion, and blue eyes encircled with black rings, — the fearful type of that decline, that wasting-away, which is produced in densely populated towns by poverty, bad air, and every sort of degradation, mental as well as bodily, among those creatures whom God created so beautiful, and who would otherwise have become magnificent in their perfect development, as all living denizens of earth, air, and sky are when man has not made their life one long punishment, — when he has not tortured their limbs with chains and their stomachs with hunger, or with food almost as fatal.

Thus Marat's portress would have been a beautiful woman, if from her fifteenth year she had not dwelt in a den without air or light; if the fire of her natural instincts, fed by this oven-like heat, or by the icy cold, had not ceaselessly burned. She had long, thin hands, which the needle of the sempstress had furrowed with little cuts, which the suds of the wash-house had cracked and softened, which the burning coals of the kitchen had roasted and tanned, — but in spite of all, hands which, by their form, that indelible trace of the divine mould, would have been called royal, if, instead of being blistered by the broom, they had wielded the sceptre. So true is it that this poor human body is only the outward sign of our profession.

But in this woman the mind, which was superior to the body, and which consequently had resisted external circumstances better, kept watch like a lamp; it illumined, as it were, the body by a reflected light, and at times a ray of beauty, youth, intelligence, and love was seen to glance from her dulled and stupid eyes, — a ray of all the finest feelings of the human heart.

Balsamo gazed attentively at the woman, or rather at this singular nature, which from the first had arrested his attention.

The portress entered, holding the letter in her hand, and in a soft, insinuating voice, in the voice of an old woman, — for women condemned to poverty are old at thirty, — said, "Monsieur Marat, here is the letter you asked for."

"It was not the letter I wanted," said Marat; "I wished to see you."

"Well! here I am at your service, Monsieur Marat." Dame Grivette made a reverence. "What do you want with me?"

"You know very well what I want; I want to know something about my watch."

"Ah! well, there! I can't tell what has become of it. I saw it all day yesterday hanging from the nail over the mantelpiece."

"You mistake, all day yesterday it was in my fob; but when I went out at six o'clock in the evening, I put it under the candlestick, because I was going among crowd, and I feared it might be stolen."

"If you put it under the candlestick, it must be there yet;" and with feigned simplicity, which she was far from suspecting to be so transparent, she raised the very candlestick of the pair which ornamented the mantelpiece, under which Marat had concealed his watch.

"Yes, that is the candlestick, sure enough," said the young man; "but where is the watch?"

"No; I see it is no longer there. Perhaps you did not put it there, Monsieur Marat."

"But when I tell you —"

"Look for it carefully."

"Oh! I have looked carefully," said Marat, with an angry glance.

"Then you have lost it."

"But I tell you that yesterday I put it under that candlestick myself."

"Then some one must have entered," said Dame Grivette; "you see so many people, so many strangers."

"All an excuse!" cried Marat, more and more enraged. "You know very well that no one has been here since yesterday. No, no; my watch is gone where the silver top of my last cane went, where the little silver spoon you know of went, and my knife with the six blades. I am robbed, Dame Grivette! I have borne much, but I shall not tolerate this; so take notice."

"But, monsieur," said Dame Grivette, "do you mean to accuse me?"

"You ought to take care of my effects."

"I am not the only one to have the key."

"You are the portress."

"You give me a crown a month, and you expect to be as well served as if you had ten domestics."

"I do not care about being badly served, but I do care whether I am robbed or not."

"Monsieur, I am an honest woman."

"Yes, an honest woman whom I shall give in charge to the police if my watch is not found in an hour."

"To the police?"

"Yes."

"To the police,—an honest woman like me?"

"An honest woman! an honest woman!"

"Yes,—and of whom nothing bad can be said; do you hear that?"

"Come, come! enough of this, Dame Grivette."

"Ah! I thought that you suspected me, when you went out."

"I have suspected you ever since the top of my cane disappeared."

"Well! Monsieur Marat, I will tell you something, in my turn."

"What will you tell me?"

"While you were away I have consulted my neighbors."

"Your neighbors,—for what purpose?"

"Respecting your suspicions."

"I had said nothing of them to you at the time."

"But I saw them plainly."

"And the neighbors? I am curious to know what they said."

"They said that if you suspect me, and have even gone so far as to impart your suspicions to another person, you must pursue the affair to the end."

"Well!"

"That is to say, you must prove that the watch has been taken."

"It has been taken, since it was there, and is now gone."

"Yes, but taken by me, — taken by me, do you understand? Oh! justice requires proofs; your word will not be sufficient, Monsieur Marat; you are no more than one of ourselves, Monsieur Marat."

Balsamo, calm as ever, looked on during this scene. He saw that though Marat's conviction was not altered, he had, nevertheless, lowered his tone.

"Therefore," continued the portress, "if you do not render justice to my probity, if you do not make some reparation to my character, it is I who will send for the police, as our landlord just now advised me to do."

Marat bit his lips. He knew there was a real danger in this. The landlord was an old, rich, retired merchant. He lived on the third story; and the scandal-mongers of the quarter did not hesitate to assert that, some ten years before, he had not been indifferent to the charms of the portress, who was then kitchen-maid to his wife.

Now, Marat attended mysterious meetings. Marat was a young man of not very settled habits, besides being addicted to concealment and suspected by the police; and for all these reasons he was not anxious to have an affair with the commissary, seeing that it might tend to place him in the hands of Monsieur de Sartines, who liked much to read the papers of young men such as Marat, and to send the authors of such noble writings to houses of meditation such as Vincennes, the Bastille, Charenton and Bicêtre.

Marat, therefore, lowered his tone; but in proportion as he did so, the portress raised hers. The result was that this nervous and hysterical woman raged like a flame

which is fed by a current of air. Threats, oaths, cries, tears, — she employed all in turn; it was a regular tempest.

Then Balsamo judged that the time had come for him to interfere. He advanced toward the wŏman, and looking at her with an ominous and fiery glance, he stretched two fingers toward her, uttering, not so much with his lips as with his eyes, his thought, his whole will, a word which Marat could not hear.

Immediately Dame Grivette became silent, tottered, and, losing her balance, staggered backward, her eyes fearfully dilated, and fell upon the bed without uttering a word. After a short interval her eyes closed and opened again, but this time the pupils could not be seen; her tongue moved convulsively, but her body was motionless; and yet her hands trembled as if shaken by fever.

"Oh! oh!" said Marat; "like the wounded man in the hospital!"

"Yes."

"Then she is asleep?"

"Silence!" said Balsamo. Then, addressing Marat, "Monsieur," said he, "the moment has now come when all your incredulity must cease. Pick up that letter which this woman was bringing you, and which she dropped when she fell."

Marat obeyed. "Well?" he asked.

"Wait!" and taking the letter from Marat's hands, "You know from whom this letter comes?" asked Balsamo of the somnambulist.

"No, Monsieur," she replied.

Balsamo held the sealed letter close to the woman. "Read it to Monsieur Marat, who wishes to know the contents."

"She cannot read," said Marat.

"Yes, but you can read?"

"Of course."

"Well, read it, and she will read it after you, in proportion as the words are engraven upon your mind."

Marat broke the seal of the letter and read it, while Dame Grivette, standing, and trembling beneath the all-powerful will of Balsamo, repeated, word for word, as Marat read them to himself, the following words:—

MY DEAR HIPPOCRATES,—Apelles has just finished his portrait; he has sold it for fifty francs, and these fifty francs are to be eaten to-day at the tavern in the Rue St. Jacques. Will you come?

P. S.—It is understood part is to be drunk.

Your friend,
L. DAVID.

It was word for word what was written. Marat let the paper fall from his hand.

"Well," said Balsamo, "you see that Dame Grivette also has a soul, and that this soul wakes while she sleeps."

"And a strange soul," said Marat,—"a soul which can read when the body cannot."

"Because the soul knows everything; because the soul can reproduce by reflection. Try to make her read this when she is awake,—that is to say, when the body has wrapped the soul in its shadow,—and you will see."

Marat was dumb; all his materialistic philosophy rebelled within him, but he could not find a reply.

"Now," continued Balsamo, "we will pass on to what interests you most,—that is to say, to what has become of your watch. Dame Grivette," said he, turning to her, "who has taken Monsieur Marat's watch?"

The somnambulist made a violent gesture of denial. "I do not know," said she.

"You know perfectly well," persisted Balsamo, "and

you shall tell me." Then, with a more decided exertion of his will, "Who has taken Monsieur Marat's watch? Speak!"

"Dame Grivette has not stolen Monsieur Marat's watch. Why does Monsieur Marat believe she has?"

"If it is not she who has taken it, tell me who has?"

"I do not know."

"You see," said Marat, "conscience is an impenetrable refuge."

"Well, since you have only this last doubt," said Balsamo, "you shall be convinced." Then, turning again to the portress, "Tell me who took the watch; I will it."

"Come, come," said Marat; "what you ask is an impossibility!"

"You heard?" said Balsamo; "I have said that I will it."

Then, under the pressure of this imperious command, the unhappy woman began to wring her hands and arms as if she were mad; a shudder like that of an epileptic fit ran through her whole body; her mouth was distorted with a hideous expression of terror and weakness; she threw herself back, rigid, as if she were in a painful convulsion, and fell upon the bed.

"No, no," said she, "I will rather die!"

"Well," said Balsamo, with a burst of anger which made the fire flash from his eyes, "you shall die, if necessary, but you shall speak. Your silence and your obstinacy are sufficient indications for me; but for an incredulous person we must have irrefragable proofs. Speak! I will it; who has taken the watch?"

The nervous excitement was at its height; all the strength and power of the somnambulist struggled against Balsamo's will; inarticulate cries escaped from her lips, which were stained with a reddish foam.

"She will fall into an epileptic fit," said Marat.

"Fear nothing; it is the demon of falsehood who is in her, and who refuses to come out!"

Then, turning toward the woman, and throwing into her face as much magnetic fluid as his hands could contain, "Speak!" said he; "who has taken the watch?"

"Dame Grivette," replied the somnambulist, in an almost inaudible voice.

"When did she take it?"

"Yesterday evening."

"Where was it?"

"Under the candlestick."

"What has she done with it?"

"She has taken it to the Rue St. Jacques."

"Where in the Rue St. Jacques?"

"To No. 29."

"Which story?"

"The fifth."

"To whom did she give it?"

"To a shoemaker's apprentice."

"What is his name?"

"Simon."

"What is this man to her?"

The woman was silent.

"What is this man to her?"

The somnambulist was still silent.

"What is this man to her?" repeated Balsamo.

The same silence.

Balsamo extended toward her his hand impregnated with the fluid, and the unfortunate woman, overwhelmed by this terrible attack, had only strength to murmur, "Her lover."

Marat uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Silence!" said Balsamo; "allow conscience to speak."

Then, continuing to address the woman, who was trembling all over, and bathed in perspiration, "And who advised Dame Grivette to steal the watch?" he asked.

"No one. She raised the candlestick by accident; she law the watch, and the demon tempted her."

"Did she do it from want?"

"No; for she did not sell the watch."

"She gave it away, then?"

"Yes."

"To Simon?"

The somnambulist made a violent effort.

"To Simon," said she.

Then she covered her face with her hands, and burst into a flood of tears.

Balsamo glanced at Marat, who, with gaping mouth, disordered hair, and dilated eyes, was gazing at the fearful spectacle.

"Well, Monsieur," said Balsamo, "you see at last the struggle between the body and the soul. You see conscience forced to yield, even in a redoubt which it had believed impregnable. Do you confess now that God has forgotten nothing in this world, and that he is in everything? Then deny no longer that there is a conscience; deny no longer that there is a soul; deny no longer the unknown, young man! Above all, do not deny faith, which is power supreme. And since you are ambitious, Monsieur Marat, study; speak little, think much, and do not judge your superiors lightly. Adieu! my words have opened a vast field before you; cultivate this field, which contains hidden treasures. Adieu! Happy will you be if you can conquer the demon of incredulity which is in you, as I have conquered the demon of falsehood which was in this woman;" and with these words, which caused

the blush of shame to tinge the young man's cheeks, he left the room.

Marat did not even think of taking leave of him. But after his first stupor was over, he perceived that Dame Grivette was still sleeping. This sleep struck terror to his soul. Marat would rather have seen a corpse upon his bed, even if Monsieur de Sartines should interpret the fact after his own fashion.

He gazed on this lifeless form, these turned-up eyes, these palpitations, and he felt afraid. His fear increased when the living corpse rose, advanced toward him, took his hand, and said, "Come with me, Monsieur Marat."

"Whither?"

"To the Rue St. Jacques."

"Why?"

"Come, come; he commands me to take you.

Marat, who had fallen upon a chair, rose. Then Dame Grivette, still asleep, opened the door, and descended the stairs with the stealthy pace of a cat, scarcely touching the steps. Marat followed, fearing every moment that she would fall, and in falling break her neck. Having reached the foot of the stairs, she crossed the threshold and entered the street, still followed by the young man, whom she led in this manner to the house and the garret she had pointed out. She knocked at the door; Marat felt his heart beat so violently that he thought it must be audible.

A man was in the garret; he opened the door. In this man Marat recognized a workman of from twenty-five to thirty years of age, whom he had several times seen in the porter's lodge. Seeing Dame Grivette followed by Marat, the man started back. But the somnambulist walked straight to the bed, and putting her hand under the thin bolster, she drew out the watch, which she gave

to Marat, while the shoemaker Simon, pale with terror, dared not utter a word, and watched with alarmed gaze the least movements of this woman, whom he believed to be mad.

Scarcely had her hand touched Marat's, in returning him the watch, when she gave a deep sigh and murmured: "He awakes me! He awakes me!"

Her nerves relaxed like a cable freed from the capstan, the vital spark again animated her eyes, and finding herself face to face with Marat, her hand in his, and still holding the watch, — that is to say, the irrefragable proof of her crime, — she fell upon the floor of the garret in a deep swoon.

"Does conscience really exist, then?" asked Marat of himself as he left the room, doubt in his heart, and revery in his eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAN AND HIS WORKS.

WHILE Marat was employing his time so profitably in philosophizing on conscience and a dual existence, another philosopher in the Rue Plastrière was also busy in reconstructing, piece by piece, every part of the preceding evening's adventures, and asking himself if he were or were not a very wicked man. Rousseau, with his elbows leaning upon the table, and his head drooping heavily on his left shoulder, was deep in thought. His philosophical and political works, "Émile" and "Le Contrat Social," were lying open before him.

From time to time, when his reflections required it, he stooped down to turn over the leaves of these books, which he knew by heart. "Ah! good heavens!" said he, reading a paragraph from "Émile" upon liberty of conscience, "what incendiary expressions! What philosophy! Just Heaven! was there ever in the world a firebrand like me? What!" he added, clasping his hands above his head, "have I written such violent outbursts against the throne, — the altar of society? I can no longer be surprised if some dark and brooding minds have taken advantage of my sophisms, and have gone astray in the paths which I have strewed for them with all the flowers of rhetoric. I have acted as the disturber of society!"

He rose from his chair and paced the room in great agitation. "I have," he continued, "abused those men

in power who exercise tyranny over authors. Fool, barbarian that I was! Those people are right, — a thousand times right! What am I, if not a man dangerous to the State? My words, written to enlighten the masses, — at least, such was the pretext I gave myself, — have become a torch which will set the world on fire. I have sown discourses on the inequality of ranks, projects of universal fraternity, plans of education; and now I reap a harvest of passions so ferocious that they would overturn the whole framework of society, of intestine wars capable of depopulating the world, and of manners so barbarous that they would roll back the civilization of ten centuries! Oh, I am a great criminal!"

He read once more a page of his "Savoyard Vicar." "Yes, that is it! 'Let us unite to form plans for our happiness.' I have written it! 'Let us give our virtues the force which others give to their vices.' I have written that also." And Rousseau became still more agitated and unhappy than before.

"Thus, by my fault," said he, "brothers are united to brothers, and one day or other some of these concealed places of meeting will be invaded by the police; the whole nest of these men, who have sworn to eat one another in case of treachery, will be arrested, and one bolder than the others will take my book from his pocket and will say: 'What do you complain of? We are disciples of Monsieur Rousseau; we are going through a course of philosophy?' Oh, how Voltaire will laugh at that! There is no fear of that courtier's ever getting into such a wasps' nest!" The idea that Voltaire would ridicule him, put the Genevese philosopher into a violent rage. "I a conspirator!" he muttered; "I must be in my dotage, certainly! Am I not, in truth, a fine conspirator?"

He was at this point when Thérèse entered with the

breakfast; but he did not see her. She perceived that he was attentively reading a passage in the "Réveries d'un Solitaire." "Very good," said she, placing the hot milk noisily upon the very book; "my peacock is looking at himself in the glass! Monsieur reads his books! Monsieur Rousseau admires himself!"

"Come, Thérèse," said the philosopher, "patience,—leave me; I am in no humor for laughing."

"Oh, yes, it is magnificent, is it not?" said she, mockingly. "You are delighted with yourself. What vanity authors have! and how angry they are to see it in us poor women! If I happen only to look in my little mirror, Monsieur grumbles, and calls me a coquette."

She proceeded in this strain, making him the most unhappy man in the world, as if Rousseau had not been richly enough endowed by nature in this respect. He drank his milk without moistening his bread. He reflected.

"Very good," said she; "there you are, thinking again. You are going to write another book full of horrible things."

Rousseau shuddered.

"You dream," continued Thérèse, "of your ideal women, and you write books which young girls ought not to read, or else profane works which ought to be burned by the hands of the common executioner."

The martyr shuddered again. Thérèse had touched him to the quick. "No," he replied; "I will write nothing more which can cause an evil thought. On the contrary, I wish to write a book which all honest people will read with transports of joy."

"Oh, oh!" said Thérèse, taking away the cup, "that is impossible; your mind is full of obscene thoughts. Only the other day I heard you read some passage or other, and in it you spoke of women whom you adored. You are a satyr; a magus!"

This word "magus" was one of the most abusive in Thérèse's vocabulary; it always made Rousseau shudder. "There, there now!" said he; "my dear woman, you will find that you will be satisfied. I intend to write that I have found the means of regenerating the world without causing pain to a single individual by the changes which will be effected. Yes, yes; I will mature this project. No revolutions! Great heavens! my good Thérèse, no revolutions!"

"Well, we shall see," said the housekeeper. "Stay! some one rings."

Thérèse went out, and returned almost immediately with a handsome young man, whom she requested to wait in the outer apartment. Then rejoining Rousseau, who was already taking notes with his pencil, "Be quick," said she, "and lock up all these infamous things. There is some one who wishes to see you."

"Who is it?"

"A nobleman of the court."

"Did he not tell you his name?"

"A good idea! as if I would receive a stranger!"

"Tell it me, then."

"Monsieur de Coigny."

"Monsieur de Coigny!" exclaimed Rousseau; "Monsieur de Coigny, gentleman-in-waiting to the dauphin?"

"It must be the same; a charming youth, a most amiable young man."

"I will go, Thérèse."

Rousseau gave a glance at himself in the mirror, dusted his coat, wiped his slippers, which were only old shoes trodden down in the heels by long wear, and entered the dining-room, where the gentleman was waiting. The latter had not sat down. He was looking, with a sort of curiosity, at the dried plants pasted by Rousseau upon

paper, and enclosed in frames of black wood. At the noise Rousseau made in entering, he turned, and bowing most courteously, "Have I the honor," said he, "of speaking to Monsieur Rousseau?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the philosopher, in a morose voice, not unmingled, however, with a kind of admiration for the remarkable beauty and unaffected elegance of the person before him.

Monsieur de Coigny was, in fact, one of the handsomest and most accomplished gentlemen in France. It must have been for him, and such as he, that the costume of that period was invented. It displayed to the greatest advantage the symmetry and beauty of his well-turned leg, his broad shoulders, and deep chest; it gave a majestic air to his exquisitely formed head, and added to the ivory whiteness of his aristocratic hands.

His examination satisfied Rousseau, who, like a true artist, admired the beautiful wherever he met with it.

"Monsieur," said he, "what can I do for you?"

"You have been perhaps informed, Monsieur," replied the young nobleman, "that I am the Comte de Coigny. I may add that I come from her Royal Highness the Dauphiness."

Rousseau reddened and bowed. Thérèse, who was standing in a corner of the dining-room, with her hands in her pockets, gazed with complacent eyes at the handsome messenger of the greatest princess in France.

"Her Royal Highness sends to me! For what purpose?" asked Rousseau. "But take a chair, if you please, Monsieur."

Rousseau sat down, and Monsieur de Coigny drew forward a straw-bottomed chair and followed his example.

"Monsieur, here is the fact. The other day, when his Majesty dined at Trianon, he expressed a good deal of

admiration for your music, which is indeed charming. His Majesty sang your prettiest airs, and the dauphiness, who is always anxious to please his Majesty in every respect, thought that it might give him pleasure to see one of your comic operas performed in the theatre at Trianon."

Rousseau bowed low.

"I come, therefore, to ask you, from the dauphiness —"

"Oh, Monsieur!" interrupted Rousseau, "my permission has nothing to do in the matter. My pieces, and the airs belonging to them, are the property of the theatre where they are represented. The permission must therefore be sought from the comedians, and her Royal Highness will, I am assured, find no obstacles in that quarter. The actors will be too happy to play and sing before his Majesty and the court."

"That is not precisely what I am commissioned to request, Monsieur," said Monsieur de Coigny. "Her Royal Highness the Dauphiness wishes to give a more complete and more recherché entertainment to his Majesty. She knows all your operas, Monsieur."

Another bow from Rousseau.

"And sings them charmingly."

Rousseau bit his lips. "It is too much honor, Monsieur," he stammered.

"Now," pursued Monsieur de Coigny, "as several ladies of the court are excellent musicians and sing delightfully, and as several gentlemen also have studied music with some success, whichever of your operas the dauphiness may choose will be performed by this company of ladies and gentlemen, the principal actors being their Royal Highnesses."

Rousseau bounded in his chair. "I assure you, Monsieur," said he, "that this is a signal honor conferred

upon me, and I beg you will offer my most humble thanks to the dauphiness."

"Oh! that is not all," said Monsieur de Coigny, with a smile.

"Ah!"

"The troupe thus composed is more illustrious, certainly, than that usually employed, but also more inexperienced. The superintendence and the advice of a master are therefore indispensable. The performance ought to be worthy of the august spectator who will occupy the royal box, and also of the illustrious author."

Rousseau rose to bow again. This time the compliment had touched him, and he saluted Monsieur de Coigny most graciously.

"For this purpose, Monsieur," continued the gentleman-in-waiting, "her Royal Highness requests your company at Trianon, to superintend the general rehearsal of the work."

"Oh!" said Rousseau, "her Royal Highness cannot surely think of such a thing. I at Trianon?"

"Well?" said Monsieur de Coigny, with the most natural air possible.

"Oh! Monsieur, you are a man of taste and judgment; you have more tact than the majority of men: answer me, on your conscience, is not the idea of Rousseau, the philosopher, the outlaw, the misanthrope, attending at court, enough to make the whole cabal split their sides with laughter?"

"I do not see," replied Monsieur de Coigny, coldly, "how the laughter and the remarks of that foolish set which persecutes you should disturb the repose of a gallant man, and an author who may lay claim to be the first in the kingdom. If you have this weakness, Monsieur Rousseau, conceal it carefully; it alone would be sufficient to

raise a laugh at your expense. As to what remarks may be made, you will confess that they may be modified by the fact that the pleasure and the wishes of her Royal Highness the Dauphiness, presumptive heiress of the French kingdom, are in question."

"Certainly," said Rousseau, "certainly."

"Can it be, possibly, a lingering feeling of false shame?" said Monsieur de Coigny, smiling. "Because you have been severe upon kings, do you fear to humanize yourself? Ah! Monsieur Rousseau, you have given valuable lessons to the human race, but I hope you do not hate them. And, besides, you certainly except the ladies of the blood royal."

"Monsieur, you are very kind to press me so much; but think of my position, — I live retired, alone, unhappy."

Thérèse made a grimace. "Unhappy!" said she; "he is hard to please!"

"Whatever effort I may make, there will always be something in my features and manner unpleasing to the eyes of the king and the princesses, who seek only joy and happiness. What should I do there; what should I say?"

"One might suspect that you distrust yourself! But, Monsieur, do you not think that he who has written the 'Nouvelle Héloïse' and the 'Confessions' must have more talent for speaking and acting than all of us others put together, no matter what position we occupy?"

"I assure you, Monsieur, it is impossible."

"That word, Monsieur, is not known to princes."

"And for that very reason, Monsieur, I shall remain at home."

"Monsieur, you will not inflict on me — the rash messenger who undertook to give satisfaction to Madame the Dauphiness — the mortal injury of obliging me to return

to Versailles vanquished and ashamed? It would be such a blow to me that I should immediately retire into exile. Come, my dear Monsieur Rousseau, grant to me, a man full of the deepest sympathy for your works, this favor,— a favor which you would refuse to supplicating kings."

"Monsieur, your kindness gains my heart, your eloquence is irresistible, and your voice moves me more than I can tell you."

"Will you allow yourself to be persuaded?"

"No, I cannot,—no, decidedly; my health forbids such a journey."

"A journey! Oh! Monsieur Rousseau, what are you thinking of? An hour and a quarter in a carriage!"

"Yes, for you and your prancing horses."

"But all the equipages of the court are at your disposal, Monsieur Rousseau. The dauphiness charged me to tell you that there is an apartment prepared for you at Trianon; for she is unwilling that you should have to return so late to Paris. The dauphin, who knows all your works by heart, said, before the whole court, that he would be proud to show the room in his palace where Monsieur Rousseau had slept."

Thérèse uttered a cry of admiration, not for Rousseau, but for the good prince.

Rousseau could not withstand this last mark of good-will. "I must surrender," said he, "for never have I been so well attacked."

"Your heart only is vanquished, Monsieur," replied De Coigny; "your mind is impregnable."

"I will go then, Monsieur, in obedience to the wishes of her Royal Highness."

"Oh, Monsieur, receive my personal thanks! As regards the dauphiness's, permit me to abstain. She would feel annoyed at being forestalled, as she means to pay

them to you in person this evening. Besides, you know, it is the man's part to thank a young and adorable lady who is good enough to make advances to him."

"True, Monsieur," replied Rousseau, smiling; "but old men have the privilege of pretty women, — they are sought after."

"If you will name your hour, Monsieur Rousseau, I will send my carriage for you; or rather, I will come for you myself."

"No, thank you, Monsieur. I must positively refuse your kind offer. I will go to Trianon, but let me go freely, in my own way. From this moment leave me to myself. I shall come, that is all. Tell me the hour."

"What, Monsieur! you will not allow me to introduce you? I know I am not worthy of the honor, and that a name like yours needs no announcement."

"Monsieur, I am aware that at court you are more than I am anywhere in the world. I do not refuse your offer, therefore, from any motives personal to yourself, but I love my liberty. I wish to go as if I were merely taking a walk, and — in short, that is my ultimatum."

"Monsieur, I bow to your decision, and should be most unwilling to displease you in any particular. The rehearsal begins at six o'clock."

"Very well. At a quarter before six I shall be at Trianon."

"But by what conveyance?"

"That is my affair, — these are my horses." He pointed to his legs, which were still well formed, and clad with some pretension.

"Five leagues!" said Monsieur de Coigny, alarmed; "you will be exhausted. Take care, — it will be a fatiguing evening!"

"In that case I have my carriage and my horses also,

—a fraternal carriage, the popular vehicle, which belongs to my neighbor as well as to myself, and which costs only fifteen sous."

"Oh, good heavens! The omnibus! You make me shudder!"

"Its benches, which seem to you so hard, are to me like the Sybarite's couch. To me they seem stuffed with down, or with rose-leaves. Adieu, Monsieur, till this evening!"

Monsieur de Coigny, seeing himself thus dismissed, took his leave after a multitude of thanks, instructions more or less precise, and repeated offers of service. He descended the dark staircase, accompanied by Rousseau to the landing, and by Thérèse half-way down the stairs. He entered his carriage, which was waiting in the street, and drove back to Versailles, smiling to himself.

Thérèse returned to the apartment, slamming the door with angry violence, which foretold a storm for Rousseau.

CHAPTER IX.

ROUSSEAU'S TOILET.

WHEN Monsieur de Coigny was gone, Rousseau, whose ideas this visit had entirely changed, threw himself into a little armchair, with a deep sigh, and said in a sleepy tone: "Oh, how tiresome this is! How these people weary me with their persecutions!"

Thérèse caught the last words as she entered, and placing herself before Rousseau, "How proud we are!" said she.

"I?" asked Rousseau, surprised.

"Yes; you are a vain fellow, — a hypocrite!"

"I?"

"Yes, you; you are enchanted to go to court, and you conceal your joy under this pretended indifference."

"Oh, good heavens!" replied Rousseau, shrugging his shoulders, and humiliated at being so truly described.

"Do you not wish to make me believe that it is not a great honor for you to perform for the king the airs which you thump here upon your spinet, idler that you are?"

Rousseau looked angrily at his wife. "You are a simpleton," said he; "it is no honor for a man such as I am to appear before a king. To what is this man indebted that he is on the throne? To a caprice of nature, which gave him a queen as his mother; but I am worthy of being called before the king to minister to his recreation.

It is to my labor I owe it, and to the fame acquired by my labor."

Thérèse was not a woman to be so easily conquered. "I wish Monsieur de Sartines heard you talking in this style; he would give you a lodging in Bicêtre, or a cell at Charenton."

"Because this Monsieur de Sartines is a tyrant in the pay of another tyrant, and because man is defenceless against tyrants with the aid of his genius alone. But if Monsieur de Sartines were to persecute me —"

"Well, what then?" asked Thérèse.

"Ah, yes!" sighed Rousseau; "yes, I know that would delight my enemies!"

"Why have you enemies?" continued Thérèse. "Because you are ill-natured, and because you have attacked every one. Ah, Monsieur de Voltaire knows how to make friends, he does!"

"True!" said Rousseau, with an angelic smile.

"But Monsieur de Voltaire is a gentleman; he is the intimate friend of the king of Prussia; he has horses, he is rich, and lives in his chateau at Ferney. And all that he owes to his merit. Therefore, when he goes to court, he does not act the disdainful man, he is quite at home there."

"And do you think," said Rousseau, "that I shall not be at home there? Think you that I do not know where all the money that is spent there comes from, or that I am duped by the respect which is paid to the master? Oh! my good woman, who judgest everything falsely, remember, if I am disdainful, it is because I really feel contempt; remember that if I despise the pomp of these courtiers, it is because they have stolen their riches!"

"Stolen!" said Thérèse, with inexpressible indignation.

"Yes, stolen, — from you, from me, from every one. All the gold they have upon their fine clothes should be

restored to the unhappy ones who want bread. That is the reason why I, who know all these things, go so reluctantly to court."

"I do not say that the people are happy; but the king is always the king."

"Well, I obey him; what more does he want?"

"Ah, you obey because you are afraid! You must not say in my hearing that you go against your will, or that you are a brave man; for if so, I shall reply that you are a hypocrite, and that you are very glad to go."

"I do not fear anything!" said Rousseau, superbly.

"Good! Just go and say to the king one quarter of what you have been telling me the last half-hour."

"I shall assuredly do so, if my feelings prompt me."

"You?"

"Yes. Have I ever recoiled?"

"Bah! You dare not take a bone from a cat when she is gnawing it, for fear she should scratch you! What would you be if surrounded by guards and swordsmen? Look you, I know you as well as if I were your mother. You will just now go and shave yourself afresh, oil your hair, and make yourself beautiful; you will display your leg to the utmost advantage; you will put on your interesting little winking expression, because your eyes are small and round, and if you opened them naturally, that would be seen, while when you wink, you make people believe that they are as large as carriage entrances. You will ask me for your silk stockings, you will put on your chocolate-colored coat with steel buttons, and your beautiful new wig; you will order a coach, and my philosopher will go and be adored by the ladies! And to-morrow — ah, to-morrow! — there will be such ecstatic reveries, such interesting languor! You will have come

back amorous; you will sigh and write verses, and you will dilute your coffee with your tears. Oh, how well I know you!"

"You are wrong, my dear," said Rousseau. "I tell you I am reluctantly obliged to go to court. I go because, after all, I fear to cause scandal, as every honest citizen should. Moreover, I am not one of those who refuse to acknowledge the supremacy of one citizen in a republic; but as to making advances, as to brushing my new coat against the gold spangles of these gentlemen of the Œil-de-Bœuf, — no, no! I shall do nothing of the sort; and if you catch me doing so, laugh at me as much as you please."

"Then you will not dress?" said Thérèse, sarcastically.

"No."

"You will not put on your new wig?"

"No."

"You will not wink with your little eyes?"

"I tell you I will go like a free man, without affectation and without fear. I will go to court as if I were going to the theatre; and let the actors like me or not, I care not for them."

"Oh! you will at least trim your beard," said Thérèse; "it is half a foot long!"

"I tell you I shall make no change."

Thérèse burst into so loud and prolonged a laugh that Rousseau was obliged to take refuge in the next room. But the housekeeper had not finished her persecutions; she had them of all colors and kinds. She opened the closet and took out his best coat, his clean linen, and beautifully polished shoes. She spread all these articles out upon the bed and over the chairs in the apartment; but Rousseau did not seem to pay the least attention.

At last Thérèse said: "Come, it is time for you to dress.

A court toilet is no small matter. You will have barely time to reach Versailles at the appointed hour."

"I have told you, Thérèse, that I shall do very well as I am. It is the same dress in which I present myself every day among my fellow-citizens. A king is but a citizen like myself."

"Come, come!" said Thérèse, trying to tempt him and bring him to her purpose by artful insinuation; "do not pout, Jacques, and don't be foolish. Here are your clothes. Your razor is ready; I have sent for the barber, in case your nerves to-day—"

"Thank you, my dear," replied Rousseau; "I will just give myself a brush, and I will take my shoes, because I cannot go out in slippers."

"Is he going to be firm, I wonder?" thought Thérèse.

She tried to coax him, sometimes by coquetry, sometimes by persuasion, and sometimes by the violence of her raillery. But Rousseau knew her, and saw the snare. He knew that the moment he should give way, he would be unmercifully disgraced and ridiculed by his better-half. He determined, therefore, not to give way, and abstained from looking at the fine clothes, which would set off what he termed his natural advantages.

Thérèse watched him. She had only one resource left,—this was the glance which Rousseau never failed to give in the glass before he went out; for the philosopher was neat to excess, if there can be excess in neatness.

But Rousseau continued to be on his guard; and as he had caught Thérèse's watchful look, he turned his back to the looking-glass. The hour arrived; the philosopher had filled his head with all the disagreeable remarks he could think of to say to the king. He repeated some scraps of them to himself while he buckled his shoes, then tucked

his hat under his arm, seized his cane, and taking advantage of a moment when Thérèse could not see him, he pulled down his coat and his waistcoat with both hands, to smooth the creases.

Thérèse now returned, handed him a handkerchief, which he plunged into his huge pocket, and then accompanied him to the landing-place, saying: "Come, Jacques, be reasonable; you look quite frightful, — you have the air of a counterfeiter."

"Adieu!" said Rousseau.

"You look like a thief, Monsieur," said Thérèse; "take care!"

"Take care of fire," said Rousseau, "and do not touch my papers."

"You have just the air of a spy, I assure you!" said Thérèse, in despair.

Rousseau made no reply; he descended the steps singing, and favored by the obscurity, he gave his hat a brush with his sleeve, smoothed his shirt-frill with his left hand, and touched up his toilet with a rapid but skilful movement.

Arrived at the foot of the stairs, he boldly stepped into the mud of the Rue Plastrière, but walking on tiptoe, and reached the Champs-Elysées, where those honest vehicles which for the sake of exactness we will call *pataches* were stationed, and which, so late as ten years ago, still carried, or rather bundled, from Paris to Versailles those travellers who were obliged to use economy.

CHAPTER X.

THE SIDE-SCENES OF TRIANON.

The adventures of Rousseau's journey are of no importance. A Swiss, an assistant-clerk, a citizen, and an abbé were of course among his travelling companions.

He arrived at half-past five. The court was already assembled at Trianon, and the performers were going over their parts while waiting for the king; as to the author, no one thought of him. Some were aware that Monsieur Rousseau, of Geneva, was to come to direct the rehearsal; but they took no greater interest in seeing Monsieur Rousseau than they would in seeing Monsieur Rameau, or Monsieur Marmontel, or any other of those singular animals, to a sight of which the courtiers sometimes treated themselves in their drawing-rooms or country houses.

Rousseau was received by the usher-in-waiting, who had been ordered by Monsieur de Coigny to inform him as soon as the philosopher should arrive. This young nobleman hastened with his usual courtesy, and received Rousseau with most amiable greetings. But as soon as he had taken a comprehensive view of Rousseau's person, he began to stare at him with astonishment; and he could not refrain from repeating the examination.

Rousseau was dusty, pale, and dishevelled, and his paleness rendered conspicuous such a beard as no master of the ceremonies had ever seen reflected in the mirrors of Versailles.

Rousseau felt deeply embarrassed under Monsieur de Coigny's scrutiny, but more embarrassed still when, approaching the hall of the theatre, he saw the profusion of splendid dresses, valuable lace, diamonds, and blue ribbons, which, with the gilding of the hall, produced the effect of a bouquet of flowers in an immense basket.

Rousseau felt ill at ease also when he had breathed this perfumed atmosphere, so intoxicating to plebeian nerves. Yet he was obliged to proceed and put a bold face on the matter. Multitudes of eyes were fixed upon him who thus formed a stain, as it were, on the polish of the assembly. Monsieur de Coigny, still preceding him, led him to the orchestra, where the musicians were awaiting him. When there, he felt rather relieved, and while his music was performed, he seriously reflected that the worst danger was past, that the step was taken, and that all the reasoning in the world could now be of no avail.

Already the dauphiness was on the stage, in her costume as Colette; she waited for Colin. Monsieur de Coigny was changing his dress in his box. Suddenly the king entered, surrounded by a crowd of bending heads. Louis smiled, and seemed to be in the best humor possible. The dauphin seated himself at his right hand, and the Comte de Provence, arriving soon after, took his place on the left. On a sign from the king, the fifty persons who composed the assembly, private as it was, took their seats.

"Well, why do you not begin?" asked Louis.

"Sire," said the dauphiness, "the shepherds and shepherdesses are not yet dressed; we are waiting for them."

"They can perform in their usual dresses," said the king.

"No, Sire," replied the dauphiness; "for we wish to try the stage-dresses and costumes by candle-light, to be certain of the effect."

"You are right, Madame," said the king; "then let us take a stroll;" and Louis rose, to make the circuit of the corridor and the stage. Besides, he was rather uneasy at not seeing Madame Dubarry.

When the king had left the box, Rousseau contemplated in a melancholy mood and with an aching heart the empty hall and his own solitary position, — it was a singular contrast to the reception he had anticipated. He had pictured to himself that on his entrance all the groups would open before him; that the curiosity of the courtiers would be even more importunate and more significant than that of the Parisians; he had feared questions and presentations; and lo, no one paid any attention to him! He thought that his long beard was not yet long enough, that rags would not have been more remarked than his old clothes, and he applauded himself for not having been so ridiculous as to aim at elegance. But in the bottom of his heart he felt humiliated at being thus reduced to the simple post of leader of the orchestra. Suddenly an officer approached, and asked him if he was not Monsieur Rousseau?

"Yes, Monsieur," he replied.

"Her Royal Highness the Dauphiness wishes to speak to you, Monsieur," said the officer.

Rousseau rose, much agitated.

The dauphiness was waiting for him. She held in her hand the air of Colette, —

"My happiness is gone."

The moment she saw Rousseau she advanced toward him. The philosopher bowed very humbly, saying to himself that his bow was for the woman, not for the princess.

The dauphiness, on the contrary, was as gracious to the savage philosopher as she would have been to the most

finished gentleman in Europe. She requested his advice about the inflection she ought to give to the third line, —

"Colin leaves me."

Rousseau forthwith began to develop a theory of declamation and melody, which, learned as it was, was interrupted by the noisy arrival of the king and several courtiers.

Louis entered the room in which the dauphiness was taking her lesson from the philosopher. The first impulse of the king when he saw this carelessly dressed person was the same that Monsieur de Coigny had manifested; only Monsieur de Coigny knew Rousseau, and the king did not. He stared, therefore, long and steadily at our freeman while still receiving the thanks and compliments of the dauphiness. This look, stamped with royal authority; this look, not accustomed to be lowered before any one, — produced a powerful effect upon Rousseau, whose quick eye was timid and unsteady.

The dauphiness waited until the king had finished his scrutiny; then, advancing toward Rousseau, she said, "Will your Majesty allow me to present our author to you?"

"Your author?" said the king, affecting to search his memory.

During this short dialogue Rousseau was upon burning coals. The king's eye had successively rested upon and burned — like the sun's rays under a powerful lens — the long beard, the dubious shirt-frill, the dusty garb, and the old wig of the greatest writer in his kingdom.

The dauphiness took pity on Rousseau. "Monsieur Jean Jacques Rousseau, Sire," said she, "the author of the charming opera we are going to execute before your Majesty."

The king raised his head. "Ah!" said he, coldly, "Monsieur Rousseau, I greet you." And he continued to look at him in such a manner as to point out all the imperfections of his dress.

Rousseau asked himself how he ought to salute the king of France, without being a courtier, but also without impoliteness, for he admitted that he was in that prince's house. But while he was making these reflections, the king addressed him with that graceful ease of princes who have said everything when they have uttered an agreeable or a disagreeable remark to the person before them. Rousseau, petrified, had at first stood speechless. All the phrases he had prepared for the tyrant were forgotten.

"Monsieur Rousseau," said the king, still looking at his coat and wig, "you have composed some charming music, which has caused me to pass very pleasant moments."

Then the king, in a voice which was diametrically opposed to all harmony and melody, began singing, —

> "'Had I turned a willing ear,
> The gallants of the town to hear,
> Ah! I had found with ease
> Other lovers then to please.'

"It is charming!" said the king, when he had finished.

Rousseau bowed.

"I do not know if I shall sing it well," said the dauphiness.

Rousseau turned toward the dauphiness to make some remark in reply; but the king had begun again, and was singing the romance of Colin: —

> "'From my hut, obscure and cold,
> Care is absent never;
> Whether storm, or sun, or cold,
> Suffering, toil, forever.'"

His Majesty's singing was very trying to a musician. Rousseau, half flattered by the monarch's good memory, half wounded by his detestable execution, looked like a monkey nibbling an onion, — crying on one side of his face, and laughing on the other. The dauphiness preserved her composure with that imperturbable self-possession which is found only at court.

The king, without the least embarrassment, continued:

> " 'If thou 'lt come to cast thy lot
> In thy Colin's humble cot,
> My sweet shepherdess, Colette.
> I 'll bid adieu to all regret.' "

Rousseau felt the color rising to his face.

"Tell me, Monsieur Rousseau," said the king, "is it true that you sometimes dress in the costume of an Armenian?"

Rousseau blushed more deeply than before, and his tongue was so glued to his throat that not for a kingdom could he have pronounced a word at this moment.

The king continued to sing, without waiting for a reply:

> " 'Ah! but little, as times go,
> Doth love know
> What he 'd let, or what he 'd hinder.'

"You live in the Rue Plastrière, I believe, Monsieur Rousseau?" said the king.

Rousseau made a gesture in the affirmative with his head, but his strength could go no farther. Never had he summoned to his support so much of his reserved energy. The king hummed, —

> " 'She is a child,
> She is a child.'

"It is said you are on bad terms with Voltaire, Monsieur Rousseau?"

At this blow Rousseau lost the little presence of mind he had remaining, and was totally put out of countenance. The king did not seem to have much pity for him; and continuing his ferocious melomania, he moved off, singing:

"'Come, dance with me beneath the elms;
Young maidens, come, be merry,'"

with orchestral accompaniments which would have killed Apollo, as the latter killed Marsyas.

Rousseau remained alone in the centre of the room. The dauphiness had gone away to finish her toilet.

Rousseau, trembling and confused, regained the corridor; but on his way he stumbled against a couple dazzling with diamonds, flowers, and lace, who filled up the entire width of the corridor, although the young man pressed his lovely companion tenderly to his side.

The young woman, with her fluttering laces, her towering headdress, her fan, and her perfumes, was radiant as a star. It was she against whom Rousseau brushed in passing.

The young man, slender, elegant, and charming, with his blue ribbon rustling against his English shirt-frill, every now and then burst into a laugh of most engaging frankness, and then suddenly interrupted it with little confidential whispers, which made the lady laugh in her turn, and showed that they were on excellent terms.

Rousseau recognized the Comtesse Dubarry in this beautiful lady, — this seducing creature; and the moment he perceived her, true to his habit of concentrating all his thoughts on a single object, he no longer saw her companion. The young man with the blue ribbon was no other than the Comte d'Artois, who was merrily toying with his grandfather's favorite.

When Madame Dubarry perceived Rousseau's dark figure, she exclaimed, "Ah, good heavens!"

"What!" said the Comte d'Artois, also looking at the philosopher; and already he had stretched out his hand to make way for his companion.

"Monsieur Rousseau!" exclaimed Madame Dubarry.

"Rousseau of Geneva?" said the Comte d'Artois, in the tone of a schoolboy in the holidays.

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied the countess.

"Ah, good-day, Monsieur Rousseau!" said the young fop, seeing Rousseau making a despairing effort to force a passage, — "good-day; we are going to hear your music."

"Monseigneur!" stammered Rousseau, seeing the blue ribbon.

"Ah, most charming music!" exclaimed the countess; "and completely in harmony with the heart and mind of the author."

Rousseau raised his head, and his eyes met the burning gaze of the countess.

"Madame!" said he, ill-humoredly.

"I will play Colin, Madame!" cried the Comte d'Artois; "and I entreat that you, Madame la Comtesse, will play Colette!"

"With all my heart, Monseigneur; but I should never dare — I, who am not an artist — to profane the music of a master!"

Rousseau would have given his life to look again at her; but the voice, the tone, the flattery, the beauty, had each planted a baited hook in his heart. He tried to escape.

"Monsieur Rousseau," said the prince, blocking up the passage, "I wish you would teach me the part of Colin."

"I dare not ask Monsieur Rousseau to give me his advice respecting Colette!" said the countess, feigning timidity, and thus completing the overthrow of the philosopher. But yet his eyes inquired why.

"Monsieur Rousseau hates me!" said she to the prince, with her enchanting voice.

"You are jesting!" exclaimed the Comte d'Artois. "Who could hate you, Madame?"

"You see it plainly," she replied.

"Monsieur Rousseau is too great a man, and has written too many noble works, to fly from such a charming woman," said the Comte d'Artois.

Rousseau heaved a sigh as if he were ready to give up the ghost, and made his escape through a narrow loophole which the Comte d'Artois had imprudently left between himself and the wall.

But Rousseau was not in luck this evening. He had scarcely proceeded four steps when he met another group, composed of two men, one old, the other young. The young one wore the blue ribbon; the other, who might be about fifty years of age, was dressed in red, and looked austere and pale. These two men overheard the merry laugh of the Comte d'Artois, who exclaimed loudly: "Ah! Monsieur Rousseau! Monsieur Rousseau! I shall say that the countess put you to flight; and in truth no one would believe it."

"Rousseau!" murmured the two men.

"Stop him, brother!" said the prince, still laughing; "stop him, Monsieur de Vauguyon!"

Rousseau now comprehended on what rock his evil star had shipwrecked him. The Comte de Provence and the governor of the royal youths were before him.

The Comte de Provence also barred the way. "Good day, Monsieur," said he, in his dry, pedantic voice.

Rousseau, almost at his wits' end, bowed, muttering to himself: "I shall never get away!"

"Ah! I am delighted to have met you," said the prince, with the air of a schoolmaster who finds a pupil in fault.

"More absurd compliments!" thought Rousseau. "How insipid these great people are!"

"I have read your translation of Tacitus, Monsieur."

"Ah! true," thought Rousseau; "this one is a pedant, a scholar."

"Do you know that it is very difficult to translate Tacitus?"

"Monseigneur, I said so in a short preface."

"Yes, I know, I know; you said in it that you had only a slight knowledge of Latin."

"It is true, Monseigneur."

"Then, Monsieur Rousseau, why translate Tacitus?"

"Monseigneur, it improves one's style."

"Ah! Monsieur Rousseau, it was wrong to translate 'imperatoria brevitate' by 'a grave and concise discourse.'"

Rousseau, uneasy, consulted his memory.

"Yes," said the young prince, with the confidence of an old savant who discovers a fault in Saumaise; "yes, you translated it so. It is in the paragraph where Tacitus relates that Pison harangued his soldiers."

"Well, Monseigneur?"

"Well, Monsieur Rousseau, 'imperatoria brevitate' means, 'with the conciseness of a general,' or of a man accustomed to command. 'With the brevity of command; that is the expression, is it not, Monsieur de la Vauguyon?"

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied the governor.

Rousseau made no reply. The prince added: "That is an evident mistake, Monsieur Rousseau. Oh! I will find you another."

Rousseau turned pale.

"Stay, Monsieur Rousseau, there is one in the paragraph relating to Cecina. It begins thus: 'At in superiore Germania.' You know he is describing Cecina, and Tacitus says, 'Cito sermone.'"

"I remember it perfectly, Monseigneur."

"You translated that, 'speaking well.'"

"Yes, Monseigneur, and I thought —"

"'Cito sermone' means 'speaking quickly,' — that is to say, 'easily.'"

"I said 'speaking well.'"

"Then it should have been 'decoro,' or 'ornato,' or 'eleganti sermone;' 'cito' is a picturesque epithet, Monsieur Rousseau. So, in portraying the change in Otho's conduct, Tacitus says: 'Delata voluptate, dissimulata luxuria, cunctaque ad imperii decorem composita.'"

"I have translated that: 'Dismissing luxury and effeminacy to other times, he surprised the world by industriously applying himself to re-establish the glory of the empire.'"

"Wrong, Monsieur Rousseau, wrong! In the first place, you have run the three little phrases into one, which obliges you to translate 'dissimulata luxuria' badly. Then you made a blunder in the last portion of the phrase. Tacitus did not mean that the Emperor Otho applied himself to re-establishing the glory of the empire; he meant to say that, no longer gratifying his passions, and dissimulating his luxurious habits, Otho accommodated all, made all turn, — all, you understand, Monsieur Rousseau; that is to say, even his passions and his vices, — to the glory of the empire. That is the sense, — it is rather complex; yours, however, is too restricted, is it not, Monsieur de la Vauguyon?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

Rousseau perspired and panted under this pitiless infliction. The prince allowed him a moment's breathing-time, and then continued: "You are much more in your element in philosophy, Monsieur."

Rousseau bowed.

"But your 'Émile' is a dangerous book."

"Dangerous, Monseigneur?"

"Yes, from the quantity of false ideas it will put into the humbler citizens' heads!"

"Monseigneur, as soon as a man is a father, he can enter into the spirit of my book, whether he be the first or the last in the kingdom. To be a father — is — is —"

"Tell me, Monsieur Rousseau," asked the satirical prince, suddenly, "your 'Confessions' is a very amusing book. How many children have you had?"

Rousseau turned pale, staggered, and raised an angry and stupefied glance to his young tormentor's face, the expression of which only increased the malicious humor of the Comte de Provence. It was only malice, for without waiting for a reply the prince moved away arm-in-arm with his preceptor, continuing his commentaries on the works of the man whom he had so cruelly crushed.

Rousseau, left alone, was gradually recovering from his stupefaction, when he heard the first bars of his overture executed by the orchestra. He proceeded in that direction with a faltering step, and when he had reached his seat, he said to himself: "Fool! coward! stupid ass that I am! Now only do I find the answer I should have made the cruel little pedant. 'Monseigneur,' I should have said, 'it is not charitable in a young person to torment a poor old man.'"

He had just reached this point, quite content with his phrase, when the dauphiness and Monsieur de Coigny began their duet. The preoccupation of the philosopher was disturbed by the suffering of the musician: the ear was to be tortured after the heart.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REHEARSAL.

THE rehearsal once fairly commenced, and the general attention drawn to the stage, Rousseau was no longer remarked. He began to look around him. He heard noblemen who sang completely out of tune in their shepherd's garb, and saw ladies arrayed in their court-dresses coquetting like shepherdesses.

The dauphiness sang correctly, but she was a bad actress; her voice, moreover, was so weak that she could scarcely be heard. The king, not to intimidate any one, had retired to an obscure box, where he chatted with the ladies. The dauphin prompted the words of the opera, which went off royally badly.

Rousseau determined not to listen, but he felt it very difficult to avoid hearing. He had one consolation, however, for he had just perceived a charming face among the illustrious figurantes, and the village maiden who was the possessor of this charming face had incomparably the finest voice in the entire company.

Rousseau's attention became at once completely riveted, and from his position behind his desk he gazed with his whole soul at the charming figurante, and listened with all his ears to drink in the enchanting melody of her voice.

When the dauphiness saw the author so attentive, she was convinced by his smile and his sentimental air that he was pleased with the execution of his work; and eager

for a compliment, — for she was a woman, — she leaned forward to the desk, saying: "Is our performance very bad, Monsieur Rousseau?"

But Rousseau, with lips apart and absent air, did not reply.

"Oh! we have made some blunders," said the dauphiness, "and Monsieur Rousseau dares not tell us! I entreat you, Monsieur Rousseau!"

Rousseau's gaze followed the beautiful personage, who on her side did not perceive the attention which she excited.

"Ah!" said the dauphiness, observing the direction of our philosopher's eyes, "it is Mademoiselle Taverney who has been in fault!"

Andrée blushed; she saw all eyes directed toward her.

"No, no!" exclaimed Rousseau; "it was not Mademoiselle, for Mademoiselle sings like an angel!"

Madame Dubarry darted at the philosopher a look keener than a javelin. The Baron de Taverney, on the contrary, felt his heart bound with joy, and greeted Rousseau with a most enchanting smile.

"Do you think that young girl sings well?" said Madame Dubarry to the king, who was evidently struck by Rousseau's words.

"In a chorus I cannot hear distinctly," said Louis XV.; "only a musician can properly distinguish."

Meanwhile Rousseau was busy in the orchestra directing the chorus: —

> "Colin returns to his shepherdess;
> Hail we all a return so gay."

As he turned to resume his seat, he saw Monsieur de Jussieu bowing to him graciously. It was no slight

pleasure for the Genevese to be seen thus giving laws to the court by a courtier who had wounded him a little by his superiority. He returned his bow most ceremoniously, and continued to gaze at Andrée, who looked even more lovely for the praises she had received.

As the rehearsal proceeded, Madame Dubarry became furious; twice had she surprised Louis XV.'s attention wandering, distracted by the spectacle before him from the sweet speeches she whispered. To her jealous observation Andrée was the chief feature of the spectacle.

The dauphiness, however, received many compliments, and was in gay spirits. Monsieur de Richelieu fluttered around her with the agility of a young man, and succeeded in forming, at the extremity of the stage, a circle of laughers, of which the dauphiness was the centre, and which rendered the Dubarry party extremely uneasy. "It appears," said he aloud, "that Mademoiselle de Taverney has a sweet voice."

"Charming!" said the dauphiness; "and had I not been too selfish, I should have allowed her to play Colette; but as it is for my amusement that I undertook the character, I will give it up to no one."

"Oh! Mademoiselle de Taverney would not sing it better than your Royal Highness," said Richelieu, "and —"

"Mademoiselle is an excellent musician," said Rousseau, with enthusiasm.

"Excellent!" responded the dauphiness; "and, to confess the truth, it is she who teaches me my part, — besides, she dances enchantingly, and I dance very badly."

The effect of this conversation upon the king, upon Madame Dubarry, and the whole crowd of curious newsmongers and envious intriguers, may be imagined. All

either tasted the pleasure of inflicting a wound, or received the blow with shame and grief. There were no indifferent spectators, except perhaps Andrée herself.

The dauphiness, incited by Richelieu, finally made Andrée sing the air, —

"I have lost my love;
Colin leaves me."

The king's head was seen to mark the time with such evident tokens of pleasure that Madame Dubarry's rouge fell off in little flakes, as paintings are scaled by moisture.

Richelieu, more malicious than a woman, enjoyed his revenge. He had drawn near the elder Taverney, and the two old men formed a tableau which might have been taken for Hypocrisy and Corruption sealing a compact of union. Their joy increased the more as Madame Dubarry's features grew by degrees darker and darker. She added the finishing stroke to it by rising angrily, which was contrary to all etiquette, as the king was still seated.

The courtiers, like ants, felt the storm approach, and hastened to seek shelter with the strongest. The dauphiness was more closely surrounded by her own friends, Madame Dubarry was more courted by hers.

By degrees the interest of the rehearsal was diverted from its natural course into quite a different direction. Colin and Colette were no more thought of, and many spectators thought that it would soon be Madame Dubarry's turn to sing, —

"I have lost my love;
Colin leaves me."

"Do you mark," whispered Richelieu to Taverney, "your daughter's immense success?" and he drew him into the corridor, pushing open a glass-door, and causing a

looker-on, who had been clinging to the framework in order to see into the hall, to fall backward.

"Confound the fellow!" growled Richelieu, dusting his sleeve, which the door had brushed against on its rebound; and he seemed still more angry when he saw that the looker-on was dressed like a workman of the chateau.

It was, in fact, a workman, with a basket of flowers under his arm, who had succeeded in climbing up behind the glass, from which position he had looked into the hall and witnessed the entire spectacle. He was pushed back into the corridor, and almost overturned; he himself escaped falling, but his basket was upset.

"Ah! I know the rascal," said Taverney, angrily.

"Who is it?" asked the duke.

"What are you doing here, scoundrel?" said Taverney.

Gilbert — the reader has doubtless already recognized him — replied haughtily, "You see, — I am looking."

"Instead of being at your work," said Richelieu.

"My work is done," said Gilbert, humbly addressing the duke, without deigning to look at Taverney.

"Am I fated to meet this lazy rascal everywhere?" said Taverney.

"Gently, Monsieur," interrupted a voice; "gently. My little Gilbert is a good workman and an industrious botanist."

Taverney turned, and saw Monsieur de Jussieu, who was patting Gilbert on the head. The baron reddened with anger and moved off.

"Valets here!" muttered he.

"Hush!" said Richelieu, "there is Nicole! Look, — up there, in the corner by that door. The little witch! she is not making bad use of her eyes either."

The marshal was correct. Partially concealed behind a score of the domestics of Trianon, Nicole raised her charm-

ing head above all the others, and her eyes, dilated with surprise and admiration, seemed to magnify the scene at which she gazed. Gilbert perceived her, and turned another way.

"Come, come!" said the duke to Taverney; "I think the king wishes to speak to you. He is looking this way;" and the two friends disappeared in the direction of the royal box.

Madame Dubarry was standing behind the king and interchanging signs with Monsieur d'Aiguillon, who was also standing, and who did not lose one of his uncle's movements.

Rousseau, now left alone, admired Andrée; he was endeavoring, if we may use the expression, to fall in love with her.

The illustrious actors proceeded to disrobe in their boxes, which Gilbert had decorated with fresh flowers.

Taverney, left alone in the passage by Monsieur de Richelieu, who had gone to rejoin the king, felt his heart alternately chilled and elated. At last the duke returned, and placed his finger upon his lips. Taverney turned pale with joy, and advanced to meet his friend, who drew him beneath the royal box. There they overheard the following conversation, which was quite inaudible to the rest of the company. Madame Dubarry was saying to the king: "May I expect your Majesty to supper this evening?"

And the king replied: "I feel fatigued, Countess; excuse me."

At the same moment the dauphin entered, almost treading on Madame Dubarry's toes, without seeming to see her.

"Sire," said he, "will your Majesty do us the honor of taking supper with us at Trianon?"

"No, my son; I was just saying to the countess that I

feel fatigued. Our young people have made me giddy; I shall sup alone."

The dauphin bowed and retired. Madame Dubarry made a profound reverence, and, trembling with rage, left the box. When she had gone, the king made a sign to the Duc de Richelieu.

"Duke," said he, "I wish to speak to you about an affair which concerns you."

"Sire —"

"I have not been pleased — I wish you to explain to me — Stay, I am alone; you shall take supper with me;" and the king looked at Taverney. "You know this gentleman, I think, Duke?"

"Monsieur de Taverney? Yes, Sire."

"Ah! the father of the charming singer?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Listen, Duke!"

The king stooped to whisper in Richelieu's ear. Taverney clenched his hands till the nails entered the flesh, to avoid showing any emotion. Immediately afterward Richelieu brushed past Taverney, and said: "Follow me, without seeming to do so."

"Whither?" asked Taverney, in the same tone.

"No matter; follow me."

The duke moved away. Taverney followed him at a little distance to the king's apartment. The duke entered; Taverney waited in the ante-room.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CASKET.

MONSIEUR DE TAVERNEY had not to wait long. Richelieu, having asked the king's valet for something his Majesty had left upon his dressing-table, soon returned, carrying a parcel, the nature of which the baron could not distinguish, on account of the covering of silk which enveloped it. But the marshal soon relieved his friend from all anxiety. Drawing him into a corner of the gallery, "Baron," said he, as soon as he saw that they were alone, "you have at times seemed to doubt my friendship for you?"

"Never since our reconciliation," replied Taverney.

"At least, you were in doubt concerning your fortune and that of your children?"

"Oh! as to that,—yes."

"Well, you were wrong. Your children's fortune and your own is made with a rapidity which should make you giddy."

"Bah!" said Taverney, who suspected part of the truth, but who, as he was not quite certain, took care to guard against mistakes; "how is the fortune of my children so quickly made?"

"Monsieur Philippe is already a captain, with a company paid for by the king."

"It is true; I owe that to you."

"By no means. Now we shall have Mademoiselle de Taverney a marchioness, perhaps."

"Come, come!" exclaimed Taverney. "What, — my daughter!"

"Listen, Taverney! the king has great taste; and beauty, grace, and virtue, when accompanied by talent, delight his Majesty. Now, Mademoiselle de Taverney unites all these qualities in a very high degree. The king is therefore delighted with Mademoiselle de Taverney."

"Duke," replied Taverney, assuming an air of dignity at which the marshal could scarcely repress a smile, — "Duke, what do you mean by 'delighted'?"

Richelieu did not like pretension, and replied, dryly: "Baron, I am not a great linguist; I am not even well versed in orthography. I have always thought that 'delighted' signified 'pleased beyond measure.' If you are grieved beyond measure to see the king pleased with the beauty, the talent, the merit of your children, you have only to say so, — I will return to his Majesty;" and Richelieu turned on his heel with a movement quite juvenile.

"You misunderstand me, Duke!" exclaimed the baron, stopping him. "Confound it, how hasty you are!"

"Why did you say that you were not satisfied?"

"I did not say so."

"You asked for explanations of the king's pleasure; you are foolish!"

"But, Duke, I did not breathe a syllable of that. For my own part, I most certainly am satisfied."

"Ah, you! Well, who will be dissatisfied, — your daughter?"

"Eh! eh!"

"My dear fellow, you have brought up your daughter like a savage, as you are."

"My dear friend, the young lady educated herself; you

may easily imagine that I could not possibly trouble myself with any such matter. I had enough to do to support life in my den at Taverney. Virtue in her has sprung up spontaneously."

"And yet people say that country folks know how to pull up weeds! In short, your daughter is a prude."

"You mistake; she is a dove."

Richelieu made a grimace. "Well," said he, "the poor child has only to look out for a good husband, for opportunities of making a fortune will come to her rarely with this defect."

Taverney looked uneasily at the duke.

"Fortunately for her," continued Richelieu, "the king is so desperately in love with the Dubarry that he will never think seriously of another."

Taverney's alarm was changed to anguish.

"Therefore," continued Richelieu, "you and your daughter may make your minds easy. I will state the unavoidable obstacles to his Majesty, and the king will never bestow another thought on the matter."

"But obstacles to what? Good heavens!" exclaimed Taverney, turning pale, and shaking his friend's arm.

"To his making a little present to Mademoiselle Andrée, my dear Baron."

"A little present! What is it?" asked the baron, full of hope and avarice.

"Oh, a mere trifle!" said Richelieu, carelessly; and he took a casket from its silken covering.

"A casket?"

"A trifle, — a necklace worth a few million francs, which his Majesty, flattered at hearing her sing his favorite air, wished to present to the fair singer. It is quite in order; but since your daughter is easily frightened, we will drop the subject."

"Duke, you must not think of it,—that would be to offend the king."

"Of course it would; but is it not the attribute of virtue always to offend some person or some thing?"

"But, Duke, consider,—the child is not so unreasonable."

"That is to say, it is you, and not your child, who speaks."

"Oh, I know so well what she will do and say!"

"The Chinese are a very fortunate people," said Richelieu.

"Why?" asked Taverney, astonished.

"Because they have so many rivers and canals in the country."

"Duke, you turn the conversation. Do not drive me to despair; speak to me."

"I am speaking to you, Baron, and am not changing the conversation at all."

"Then why do you speak of China? What have its rivers to do with my daughter?"

"A great deal. The Chinese, I mean, have the happiness of being able to drown their daughters when they are too virtuous, and no one can forbid it."

"Come, Duke, you must be just! Suppose you had a daughter yourself?"

"*Pardieu!* I have one; and if any one were to tell me that she is too virtuous, it would be very ill-natured of him."

"In short, you would like her better otherwise, would you not?"

"Oh! for my part, I don't meddle with my children after they are eight years old."

"Listen to me, at least! If the king were to commission me to offer a necklace to your daughter, and if your daughter were to complain to you?"

"Oh, my friend, there is no comparison! I have always lived at court, — you have lived like a North American Indian; there is no similarity. What you call virtue, I think folly. Remember, for the future, that nothing is more ill-bred than to say, 'What would you do in this or that case?' And besides, your comparisons are erroneous, my friend. It is not true that I am about to present a necklace to your daughter."

"You said so."

"I said nothing of the sort. I said that the king had directed me to bring him a casket for Mademoiselle de Taverney, whose voice had pleased him; but I did not say that his Majesty had charged me to give it to her."

"Then, in truth," said the baron, in despair, "I know not what to think. I do not understand a single word; you speak in enigmas. Why give this necklace, if it is not to be given? Why do you take charge of it, if not to deliver it?"

Richelieu uttered an exclamation as if he had seen a spider. "Ah!" said he; "pouah!—pouah! the Huron — the ugly animal!"

"Who?"

"You, my good friend, — you, my trusty comrade; you seem as if you had fallen from the clouds, Baron!"

"I am at my wits' end."

"No, you never had any. When a king makes a lady a present, and when he charges Monsieur de Richelieu with the commission, the present is noble, and the commission well executed, — remember that. I do not deliver caskets, my dear fellow, — that was Monsieur Lebel's office. Did you know Monsieur Lebel?"

"What is your office, then?"

"My friend," said Richelieu, tapping Taverney on the shoulder, and accompanying this amicable action by a

sardonic smile, "when I have to do with such paragons of virtue as Mademoiselle Andrée, I am the most moral man in the world. When I approach a dove, as you call your daughter, I do not display the talons of the hawk. When I am deputed to wait on a young lady, I speak to her father. I speak to you, therefore, Taverney, and give you the casket to present to your daughter. Well! are you willing?"—and he offered the casket. "Or do you decline?"—and he drew it back.

"Oh! say, then, all that at once," exclaimed the baron; "say that I am commissioned by his Majesty to deliver the present! If so, it assumes quite a correct and paternal character; it is, so to speak, purified—"

"Purified! Why, you must have suspected his Majesty of evil intentions!" said Richelieu, seriously. "Now, you cannot have dared to do that?"

"God forbid! But the world,—that is to say, my daughter—"

Richelieu shrugged his shoulders. "Will you take it?—yes, or no?" he asked.

Taverney quickly held out his hand. "You are certain it is moral?" said he to the duke, with a smile, the counterpart of that which the duke had just addressed to him.

"Do you not think it pure morality, Baron," said the marshal, "to make the father, who, as you have just said, purifies everything, an intermediate party between the king's delight and your daughter's charms? Let Monsieur Jean Jacques Rousseau, of Geneva, who was hovering about here just now, be the judge; he would say that Joseph was impure in comparison with me."

Richelieu pronounced these few words with a calmness, an abrupt haughtiness, a precision, which silenced Taverney's objections, and assisted to make him believe that

he ought to be convinced. He seized his illustrious friend's hand, therefore, and pressing it, "Thanks to your delicacy," said he, "my daughter can accept this present."

"The source and origin of the good fortune to which I alluded at the commencement of our tiresome discussion on virtue."

"Thanks, dear Duke; most hearty thanks!"

"One word more. Conceal this favor carefully from the Dubarrys. It might make Madame Dubarry leave the king and take flight."

"And the king would be displeased?"

"I don't know; but the countess would not thank us. As for me, I should be lost! Be discreet, therefore."

"Do not fear. But present my most humble thanks to the king."

"And your daughter's — I shall not fail. But you have not yet reached the limits of the favor bestowed upon you. It is you who are to thank the king, my dear fellow; his Majesty invites you to take supper with him this evening."

"Me?"

"You, Taverney. We shall be a select party, — his Majesty, you, and myself. We will talk of your daughter's virtue. Adieu, Taverney; I see Dubarry with Monsieur d'Aiguillon. We must not be seen together;" and, agile as a page, he disappeared at the farther end of the gallery, leaving Taverney gazing at his casket like a Saxon child who awakens and finds the Christmas gifts which have been placed in his hands while he slept.

CHAPTER XIII.

KING LOUIS XV.'S PRIVATE SUPPER.

The marshal found the king in the little salon whither several of the courtiers had followed him, preferring rather to lose their supper than to allow the wandering glance of their sovereign to fall on any others than themselves. But Louis XV. seemed to have something else to do this evening than to look at these gentlemen. He dismissed every one, saying that he did not intend to sup, or that, if he did, it would be alone. All the guests having thus received their dismissal, and fearing to displease the dauphin if they were not present at the fête which he was to give at the close of the rehearsal, instantly flew off like a cloud of parasite pigeons, and winged their way to him whom they were permitted to see, ready to assert that for him they had deserted his Majesty's drawing-room.

Louis XV., whom they left so rapidly, was far from bestowing a thought on them. At another time the meanness of all this swarm of courtiers would have excited a smile; but on this occasion it awoke no sentiment in the monarch's breast, — a monarch so sarcastic that he spared neither bodily nor mental defect in his best friends, if we may suppose that Louis XV. ever had a friend.

No; at that moment Louis XV. concentrated his entire attention on a carriage which was drawn up opposite the door of the offices of Trianon, the coachman seeming to wait only for the step which should announce the owner's

presence in the gilded vehicle to urge on his horses. The carriage was Madame Dubarry's, and was lighted by torches. Zamore, seated beside the coachman, was swinging his legs backward and forward like a child at play.

At last Madame Dubarry, who had no doubt waited in the corridors in the hope of receiving some message from the king, appeared, supported on Monsieur d'Aiguillon's arm. Her anger, or at least her disappointment, was apparent in the rapidity of her gait. She affected too much resolution not to have lost her presence of mind.

After Madame Dubarry followed Jean, looking gloomy in the extreme, and absently crushing his hat beneath his arm. He had not been present at the representation,— the dauphin having forgotten to invite him; but he had stolen into the ante-room somewhat after the fashion of a lackey, and stood pensive as Hippolytus, with his shirt-frill falling over his vest embroidered with silver and red flowers, and not even looking at his tattered ruffles, which seemed in harmony with his sad thoughts. Jean had seen his sister look pale and alarmed, and had concluded from this that the danger was great. Jean was brave in diplomacy only when opposed to flesh and blood, never when opposed to phantoms.

Concealed behind the window-curtain, the king saw this funereal procession defile before him and bury itself in the countess's carriage. Then, when the door was closed and the footman had mounted behind the carriage, the coachman shook the reins, and the horses started forward at a gallop.

"Oh," said the king, "without making an attempt to see me, to speak to me. The countess is furious!" And he repeated aloud, "Yes, the countess is furious!"

Richelieu, who had just glided into the room like an expected visitor, caught these last words. "Furious, Sire!"

said he; "and for what? Because your Majesty is amused for a moment? Oh, that is not amiable of the countess!"

"Duke," replied Louis XV., "I am not amused; on the contrary, I am wearied, and wish for repose. Music enervates me. If I had listened to the countess, I should have supped at Luciennes; I should have eaten, and, above all, I should have drunk. The countess's wines are too strong; I do not know from what vineyards they come, but they overpower me. Upon my word, I prefer to take my ease here!"

"And your Majesty is perfectly in the right!" said the duke.

"Besides, the countess will find amusement elsewhere. Am I such an amiable companion? She may say so as much as she likes, but I do not believe her."

"Ah, this time your Majesty is in the wrong!" exclaimed the marshal.

"No, Duke; no, in truth. I count my years, and I reflect."

"Sire, the countess is well aware that she could not possibly have better company, and it is that which makes her furious."

"In truth, Duke, I do not know how you manage. You still lead the women as if you were only twenty years old. At that age it is for a man to choose; but at mine, Duke — "

"Well, Sire?"

"It is for the woman to make her calculations."

The marshal burst into a laugh. "Well, Sire," said he, "that is only an additional reason; "if your Majesty thinks the countess is amused, let us console ourselves."

"I do not say she is amused, Duke; I only say that she will in the end be driven to seek amusement."

"Ah! Sire, I dare not assert that such things have never happened."

The king rose, much agitated. "Who waits outside?" he inquired.

"All your suite, Sire."

The king reflected for a moment.

"But have you any one there?"

"I have Rafté."

"Very good."

"What shall he do, Sire?"

"He must find out if the countess really returned to Luciennes."

"The countess is already gone, I think, Sire."

"Yes, ostensibly."

"But whither does your Majesty think she is gone?"

"Who can tell? Jealousy makes her frantic, Duke."

"Sire, is it not rather your Majesty —"

"How? What?"

"Whom jealousy —"

"Duke!"

"In truth, it would be very humiliating for us all, Sire."

"I jealous?" said Louis, with a forced laugh; "are you speaking seriously, Duke?"

Richelieu did not in truth believe it. It must even be confessed that he was very near the truth in thinking that, on the contrary, the king only wished to know if Madame Dubarry was really at Luciennes, in order to be sure that she would not return to Trianon. "Then, Sire," said he, aloud, "it is understood that I am to send Rafté on a voyage of discovery?"

"Send him, Duke."

"In the mean time, what will your Majesty do before supper?"

"Nothing; we shall sup instantly. Have you spoken to the person in question?"

"Yes, he is in your Majesty's antechamber."

"What did he say?"

"He expressed his deep thanks."

"And the daughter?"

"She has not been spoken to yet."

"Duke, Madame Dubarry is jealous, and might readily return."

"Ah, Sire, that would be in very bad taste! I think the countess would be incapable of committing such an enormity."

"Duke, she is capable of anything in such moods, especially when hatred is combined with jealousy. She execrates you; I don't know if you were aware of that."

Richelieu bowed. "I know she does me that honor, Sire."

"She execrates Monsieur de Taverney also."

"If your Majesty would be good enough to reckon, I am sure there is a third person whom she hates even more than me, — even more than the baron."

"Whom?"

"Mademoiselle Andrée."

"Ah!" said the king; "I think that is natural enough."

"Then —"

"Yes, but that does not prevent its being necessary to watch that Madame Dubarry does not cause some scandal this evening."

"On the contrary, it proves the necessity of such a measure."

"Here is the butler. Hush! give your orders to Rafté, and join me in the dining-room with — you know whom!"

Louis rose, and passed into the dining-room, while

Richelieu made his exit by the opposite door. Five minutes afterward he rejoined the king, accompanied by the baron.

The king in the most gracious manner bade Taverney good-evening. The baron was a man of talent, and replied in that peculiar manner which betokens a person accustomed to good society, and which puts kings and princes instantly at their ease. They sat down to table. Louis XV. was a bad king, but a delightful companion; when he pleased, his conversation was full of attraction for boon-companions, talkers, and voluptuaries. The king, in short, had studied life carefully in its most agreeable aspects. He ate heartily, made his guests drink, and turned the conversation on music.

Richelieu caught the ball at the rebound. "Sire," said he, "if music makes men agree, as our ballet-master says, and as your Majesty seems to think, will you say as much of women?"

"Oh, Duke!" replied the king, "let us not speak of women. From the Trojan war to the present time, women have always exercised an influence contrary to that of music. You, especially, have too many quarrels to compound with them, to wish to see that subject brought forward. Among others, there is one, and that not the least dangerous, with whom you are at daggers drawn."

"The countess, Sire? Is that my fault?"

"Of course it is."

"Ah, indeed! Your Majesty, I trust, will explain."

"In two words, and with the greatest pleasure," said the king, slyly.

"I listen, Sire."

"What! she offers you the portfolio of I don't know which department, and you refuse, because, you say, she is not very popular?"

"I?" exclaimed Richelieu, a good deal embarrassed by the turn the conversation was taking.

"Certainly! the report is quite public," said the king, with that feigned good-nature which was peculiar to him. "I forget now who told it to me, — probably the gazette."

"Well, Sire!" said Richelieu, taking advantage of the freedom which the unusual gayety of the august host afforded his guests, "I must confess that on this occasion rumors, and even the gazettes, have reported something not quite so absurd as usual."

"What!" exclaimed Louis XV., "then you have really refused a portfolio, my dear Duke?"

Richelieu, it may easily be imagined, was in an awkward position. The king well knew that he had refused nothing; but it was necessary that Taverney should continue to believe what Richelieu had told him. The duke had therefore to frame his reply so as to avoid furnishing matter for amusement to the king, without at the same time incurring the reproach of falsehood, which was already hovering upon the baron's lips and twinkling in his smile.

"Sire," said Richelieu, "pray let us not speak of effects, but of the cause. Whether I have or have not refused a portfolio, is a State secret which your Majesty is not bound to divulge over the bottle; but the cause for which I should have refused the portfolio, had it been offered to me, is the important point."

"Oh, oh, Duke!" said the monarch, laughing; "and this cause is not a State secret?"

"No, Sire, and especially not for your Majesty, who is at this moment — I beg pardon of the divinity — the most amiable earthly Amphytrion in the universe for my friend the Baron de Taverney and myself. I have no secrets, therefore, from my king. I give my whole soul up to

him, for I do not wish it to be said that the King of France has not one servant who would tell him the entire truth."

"Let us hear the truth, then, Duke," said the king, while Taverney, fearing that Richelieu might go too far, pinched his lips and composed his countenance scrupulously after the king's.

"Sire, in your dominions there are two powers which a minister must obey, — the first is your will; the second, that of your Majesty's most intimate friends. The first power is irresistible, — none dare to rebel against it; the second is yet more sacred, for it imposes duties of the heart on whosoever serves you. It is termed your confidence. To obey it, a minister must have the most devoted regard for the favorite of the king."

Louis XV. laughed. "Duke," said he, "that is a very good maxim, and one I am delighted to hear from your lips; but I dare you to proclaim it aloud by sound of trumpet upon the Pont Neuf."

"Oh, I know, Sire," said Richelieu, "that the philosophers would be up in arms; but I do not think that their objurgations would matter much to your Majesty or to me. The chief point is that the two dominant wills in the kingdom may be satisfied. Well! the will of a certain person, — I will confess it openly to your Majesty, even should my disgrace, that is, my death, be the consequence, — Madame Dubarry's will I could not obey."

Louis was silent.

"It occurred to me the other day," continued Richelieu, "to look around in your Majesty's court; and in truth I saw so many noble girls, so many women of dazzling beauty, that had I been king of France, I should have found it almost impossible to choose."

Louis turned to Taverney, who, seeing things take such

a favorable turn for him, sat trembling with hope and fear, aiding the marshal's eloquence with eyes and breath, as if he would waft forward the vessel loaded with his fortunes to a safe harbor.

"Come, Baron, what is your opinion?" said the king.

"Sire," replied Taverney, with swelling heart, "the duke, as it seems to me, has been saying excellent things to your Majesty."

"Then you are of his opinion in what he says of lovely girls?"

"In fact, Sire, I think there are indeed very lovely young girls at the French court."

"Then you are of his opinion?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And, like him, you advise me to choose among the beauties of the court?"

"I would venture to confess that I am of the marshal's opinion, if I dared to believe that it was also your Majesty's."

There was a short silence, during which the king looked complaisantly at Taverney. "Gentlemen," said he, "no doubt I should follow your advice, if I were only thirty years of age. I should have a very natural predilection for it; but I find myself at present rather too old to be credulous."

"Credulous! pray, Sire, explain the meaning of the word."

"To be credulous, my dear Duke, means to believe. Now, nothing will make me believe certain things."

"What are they?"

"That at my age it is possible to inspire love."

"Ah, Sire!" exclaimed Richelieu, "until this moment I thought your Majesty was the most polite gentleman in

your dominions; but with deep regret I see that I have been mistaken."

"How so?" asked the king, laughing.

"Because, in that case, I must be as old as Methuselah, as I was born in '94. Remember, Sire, I am sixteen years older than your Majesty."

This was an adroit piece of flattery on the duke's part. Louis XV. had always admired this man's age, who had outlived so many younger men in his service; for having this example before him, he might hope to reach the same advanced period.

"Granted," said Louis; "but I hope you no longer have the pretension to be loved for yourself, Duke?"

"If I thought not, Sire, I would instantly quarrel with two ladies who told me so only this very morning."

"Well! Duke," said Louis, "we shall see; Monsieur de Taverney, we shall see. Youth rejuvenates, it is very true."

"Yes, yes, Sire; and we must not forget that a powerful constitution, like your Majesty's, always gains, and never loses."

"Yet I remember," said Louis, "that my predecessor, when he became old, no longer courted women with the same boldness."

"Come, come, Sire!" said Richelieu. "Your Majesty knows my great respect for the late king, who twice sent me to the Bastille; but that ought not to prevent me from saying that there is a vast difference between the ripe age of Louis XV. and that of Louis XIV. What the devil! your most Christian Majesty, although honoring fully your title of eldest son of the Church, does not carry asceticism so far as to forget your humanity?"

"Faith, no!" said Louis. "I may confess it, since neither my doctor nor confessor is present."

"Well, Sire! the king, your grandfather, frequently astonished Madame de Maintenon, who was even older than he, by his excess of religious zeal and his innumerable penances. I repeat it, Sire, can there be any comparison made between your two Majesties?"

The king this evening was in a good humor. Richelieu's words acted upon him like so many drops of water from the fountain of youth. Richelieu thought the time had come; he touched Taverney's knee with his.

"Sire," said the latter, "will your Majesty deign to accept my thanks for the magnificent present you have made my daughter?"

"You need not thank me for that, Baron," said the king. "Mademoiselle de Taverney pleased me by her modest and ingenuous grace. I wish my daughters had still their households to form; certainly, Mademoiselle Andrée — that is her name, is it not —?"

"Yes, Sire," said Taverney, delighted that the king knew his daughter's Christian name.

"A very pretty name. Certainly Mademoiselle Andrée should have been the first upon the list; but every post in my house is filled up. In the mean time, Baron, you may reckon upon my protection for your daughter. I think I have heard she has not a rich dowry?"

"Alas! no, Sire."

"Well, I will make her marriage my especial care."

Taverney bowed to the ground.

"Then your Majesty must be good enough," said he, "to select a husband; for I confess that, in our confined circumstances, — our almost poverty —"

"Yes, yes; rest easy on that point," said Louis. "But she seems very young; there is no haste."

"The less, Sire, that your protégée has a horror of marriage."

"Ha!" said Louis, rubbing his hands and looking at Richelieu. "Well! at all events, Monsieur de Taverney, command me whenever you are at all embarrassed."

Then, rising, the king beckoned the duke, who approached. "Was the little one satisfied?" he asked.

"With what?"

"With the casket."

"Your Majesty must excuse my speaking low, but the father is listening, and he must not overhear what I have to tell you."

"Bah!"

"No, I assure you, Sire."

"Well, speak!"

"Sire, the little one has indeed a horror of marriage; but of one thing I am certain, — she has not a horror of your Majesty."

Uttering these words in a tone of familiarity which pleased the king from its very frankness, the marshal, with his little, pattering steps, hastened to rejoin Taverney, who, from respect, had moved away to the door of the gallery.

Both retired by the gardens. It was a lovely evening. Two servants walked before them, holding torches in one hand, and with the other pulling aside the branches of the flowering shrubs. The windows of Trianon were blazing with light, and flitting across them could be discerned a crowd of joyous figures, the honored guests of the dauphiness. His Majesty's band gave life and animation to the minuet, for dancing had begun after supper, and was still continued.

Concealed in a dense thicket of lilac and snowball shrubs, Gilbert, kneeling upon the ground, was gazing at the movements of the shadows through the transparent curtains. A thunderbolt cleaving the earth would scarcely

have distracted the attention of the gazer, so much was he entranced by the lovely forms he was following with his eyes through all the mazes of the dance. Nevertheless, when Richelieu and Taverney passed, and brushed against the thicket in which this night-bird was concealed, the sound of their voices, and above all a certain word, made Gilbert raise his head; for this word was an all-important one for him.

The marshal, leaning upon his friend's arm, and bending down to his ear, was saying: "Everything well weighed and considered, Baron, — it is a hard thing to tell you, — but you must at once send your daughter to a convent."

"Why so?" asked the baron.

"Because I would wager," replied the marshal, "that the king is in love with Mademoiselle de Taverney."

At these words Gilbert started, and turned paler than the flaky snow-berries which at his abrupt movement showered down upon his head and shoulders.

CHAPTER XIV.

PRESENTIMENTS.

The next day, as the clock at Trianon was striking twelve, Nicole's voice was heard calling Andrée, who had not yet left her chamber, "Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle, here is Monsieur Philippe!"

The exclamation came from the foot of the stairs. Andrée, at once surprised and delighted, drew her muslin robe closely over her neck and shoulders, and hastened to meet the young man, who was in fact dismounting in the court-yard of Trianon, and inquiring of the servants at what time he could see his sister.

Andrée therefore opened the door in person, and found herself face to face with Philippe, whom the officious Nicole had gone to meet in the courtyard, and was accompanying up the stairs. The young girl threw her arms round her brother's neck, and they entered Andrée's apartments together, followed by Nicole.

It was then that Andrée for the first time remarked that Philippe was more serious than usual, that his smile was not free from sadness, that he wore his elegant uniform with the most scrupulous neatness, and that he held a travelling cloak over his arm.

"What is the matter, Philippe?" she asked, with that instinct of tender souls to which a look is a sufficient revelation.

"My sister," said Philippe, "this morning I received an order to join my regiment."

"And you are going?"

"And I am going."

"Oh!" said Andrée; and with this plaintive exclamation all her courage, and almost all her strength, seemed to desert her. Although this departure was a very natural occurrence, and one which she might have foreseen, yet she felt so overpowered by the announcement that she was obliged to lean for support on her brother's arm.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Philippe, astonished, "does this departure afflict you so much, Andrée? You know, in a soldier's life, it is a most commonplace event."

"Yes, yes, it is in truth common," murmured the young girl. "And whither do you go, brother?"

"My garrison is at Rheims. You see, I have not a very long journey to undertake. But it is probable that from there the regiment will return to Strasburg."

"Alas!" said Andrée, "and when do you set out?"

"The order commands me to start immediately."

"You have come to bid me good-by, then?"

"Yes, sister."

"A farewell!"

"Have you anything particular to say to me, Andrée?" asked Philippe, fearing that this extreme dejection might have some other cause than his departure.

Andrée understood that these words were meant to call her attention to Nicole, who, astonished at Andrée's extreme grief, was gazing at this scene with much surprise; for, in fact, the departure of an officer to his garrison was not a catastrophe to cause such a flood of tears.

Andrée, therefore, noticed at the same instant Philippe's feelings and Nicole's surprise. She took up a mantle, threw it over her shoulders, and leading her brother to the staircase, "Come," said she, "as far as the park-gates,

Philippe. I will accompany you through the covered alley. I have indeed many things to tell you, brother."

These words were equivalent to a dismissal for Nicole, who returned to her mistress's chamber, while the latter descended the staircase with Philippe.

Andrée led the way to the passage which still, even at the present day, opens into the garden; but although Philippe's look anxiously questioned her, she remained for a long time silent, leaning upon his arm, and supporting her head upon his shoulder. But at last her heart was too full; her features were overspread with a deathlike paleness, a deep sigh escaped her lips, and tears rushed from her eyes.

"My dear sister, my sweet Andrée!" exclaimed Philippe, "in the name of Heaven, what is the matter?"

"My friend, my only friend!" said Andrée, "you depart, you leave me alone in this great world, which I entered but yesterday, and yet you ask me why I weep? Ah! remember, Philippe, I lost my mother at my birth; it is dreadful to acknowledge it, but I have never had a father. All my little griefs, all my little secrets, I could confide to you alone. Who smiled upon me? Who took care of me? Who caressed me? Who rocked me in my cradle? It was you. Who has protected me since I grew up? You. Who taught me that God's creatures were not cast into the world only to suffer? You, Philippe, — you alone. For since the hour of my birth, I have loved no one in the world but you, and no one but you has loved me in return. Oh, Philippe, Philippe!" continued Andrée, sadly, "you turn away your head, and I can read your thoughts. You think I am young, that I am beautiful, and that I am wrong not to trust to the future and to love. And yet you see, alas! Philippe, it is not enough to be young and handsome, for no one thinks of me.

"You will say the dauphiness is kind; and she is so. She is all perfection; at least, she seems so in my eyes, and I look upon her as a divinity. But it is exactly because she holds this exalted station that I can feel only respect for her, and not affection. Yet, Philippe, affection is necessary for my heart, which, if always thrust back on itself, must at last break. My father—I tell you nothing new, Philippe—my father is not only no protector or friend, but I cannot even look at him without feeling terror. Yes, yes, I fear him, Philippe; and still more now that you are leaving me. Why do I fear him? I do not know. Eh, *mon Dieu!* do not the birds of the air and the flocks of the field feel and dread the approaching storm? You will say they are endowed with instinct; but why will you deny the instinct of misfortune to our immortal souls? For some time past everything has prospered with our family, I know it well. You are a captain; I am in the household, and almost in the intimacy, of the dauphiness; my father, it is said, supped last night almost *tête-à-tête* with the king. Well, Philippe, I repeat it, even should you think me mad, all this alarms me more than our peaceful poverty and obscurity at Taverney."

"And yet, dear sister," said Philippe, sadly, "you were alone there also; I was not with you there to console you."

"Yes, but at least I was alone,—alone with the memories of childhood. It seemed to me as if the house where my mother lived and breathed her last would bestow upon me, if I may so speak, a protecting care. All there was peaceful, gentle, friendly. I could see you depart with calmness, and welcome you back with joy. But whether you departed or returned, my heart was not all with you; it was attached also to that dear house, to my gardens, to my flowers, to the whole scene of which formerly you

were but a part. Now you are all to me, Philippe, and when you leave me I am indeed alone."

"And yet, Andrée, you have now a protection far more powerful than mine."

"True."

"A happy future before you."

"Who can tell?"

"Why do you doubt it?"

"I do not know."

"This is ingratitude toward God, sister."

"Oh! no, thank Heaven, I am not ungrateful to God. Morning and evening I offer up thanks to him; but it seems to me as if, instead of receiving my prayers with favor, every time I bend the knee, a voice from on high says to me, 'Take care, young girl, take care!'"

"But against what are you to guard? Answer me. I will admit that a misfortune threatens you: have you any presentiment of the nature of this misfortune? Do you know how to act so as best to confront it, or how to avoid it?"

"I know nothing, Philippe, except that my life seems to hang by a thread, that nothing will look bright to me from the moment of your departure. In a word, it seems as if during my sleep I had been placed on the declivity of a precipice too steep for me to arrest my progress when roused to a sense of my danger; that I see the abyss, and yet am dragged down; and that, you being far away, and your helping hand no longer ready to support me, I shall be dashed down and crushed in the fall."

"Dear sister! my sweet Andrée!" said Philippe, agitated in spite of himself by the expression of deep and unaffected terror in her voice and manner, "you exaggerate to yourself a tenderness for which I feel deeply grateful. Yes, you will lose your friend, but only for a time. I

shall not be so far distant but that you can send for me if necessity should arise. Besides, remember that except for your chimerical fears, nothing really threatens you."

Andrée placed herself in her brother's way. "Then, Philippe," said she, "how does it happen that you, who are a man, and gifted with so much more strength, are at this moment as sad as I am? Tell me, my brother, how do you explain that?"

"Easily, dear sister," said Philippe, arresting Andrée's steps, for she had again moved forward, on ceasing to speak. "We are brother and sister not only by blood, but in heart and affection; therefore we have lived in an intimate communion of thoughts and feelings, which, especially since our arrival in Paris, has become to me a delightful necessity. I break this chain, my dear sister, or rather it is broken by others, and I feel the blow in my heart. I am therefore sad, but only for the moment, Andrée. I can look beyond our separation; I do not believe in any misfortune, except in that of not seeing you for some months, perhaps for a year. I am resigned, and do not say 'adieu,' but rather, 'au revoir.'"

In spite of these consolatory words, Andrée could reply only by sobs and tears.

"Dear sister," exclaimed Philippe, grieved at this dejection, which seemed so incomprehensible to him, "you have not told me all, — you hide something from me. In Heaven's name, speak!" and he took her in his arms, pressing her to his heart, and gazing earnestly in her eyes.

"I!" said she. "No, no, Philippe, I assure you solemnly. You know that all the most secret recesses of my heart are open before you."

"Well, then, Andrée, for pity's sake, take courage; do not grieve me so."

"You are right," said she, "and I am mad. Listen!

I never had a strong mind, as you, Philippe, know better than any one; I have always been timid, dreaming, melancholy. But I have no right to make so tenderly beloved a brother a sharer in my fears, above all when he labors to give me courage, and proves to me that I am wrong to be alarmed. You are right, Philippe; it is true, everything here is conducive to my happiness. Forgive me, Philippe! You see, I dry my tears, I weep no longer; I smile, Philippe, — I do not say 'adieu,' but rather, 'au revoir;'" and the young maiden tenderly embraced her brother, hiding her head on his shoulder, to conceal from his view a tear which still dimmed her eye, and which dropped like a pearl upon the golden epaulette of the young officer.

Philippe gazed upon her with that infinite tenderness which partakes at the same time of a father's and a brother's affection. "Andrée," said he, "I like to see you bear yourself thus bravely. Be of good courage! I must go, but the courier will bring you a letter every week; and every week let me receive one from you in return."

"Yes, Philippe," said Andrée; "yes, it will be my only happiness. But you have informed my father, have you not?"

"Of what?"

"Of your departure."

"Dear sister, it was the baron himself who brought me the minister's order this morning. Monsieur de Taverney is not like you, Andrée, and it seems will easily part with me. He appeared pleased at the thought of my departure, and in fact he was right. Here I can never get forward, while there many occasions may present themselves."

"My father is glad to see you go?" murmured Andrée. "Are you not mistaken, Philippe?"

"He has you," replied Philippe, eluding the question; "that is a consolation for him, sister."

"Do you think so, Philippe? He never sees me."

"My sister, he bade me tell you that this very day, after my departure, he would come to Trianon. Believe me, he loves you; only it is after his own fashion."

"What is the matter now, Philippe? You seem embarrassed."

"Dear Andrée, I heard the clock strike, — what time is it?"

"A quarter of one."

"Well, dear sister, I seem embarrassed because I ought to have been on the road an hour ago; and here we are at the gate, where my horse is waiting. Therefore — "

Andrée assumed a calm demeanor, and taking her brother's hand, "Therefore," said she, in a voice too firm to be quite natural, "therefore, brother, adieu!"

Philippe gave her one last embrace.

"Au revoir," said he; "remember your promise."

"What promise?"

"One letter a week at least."

"Oh! do you think it necessary to ask it?"

She pronounced these last words with a violent effort. The poor girl's voice was scarcely audible.

Philippe waved his hand to her, and walked quickly toward the gate. Andrée followed his retreating form with her eyes, holding in her breath in the endeavor to repress her sighs. Philippe mounted his horse, shouted a last farewell from the other side of the gate, and was gone.

Andrée remained standing motionless till he was out of sight; then she turned, darted like a wounded fawn among the shady trees, perceived a bench, and had only strength sufficient to reach it, and to sink on it powerless

and almost lifeless. Then, heaving a deep and heartrending sigh, she exclaimed: "Oh, my God! why dost thou leave me thus alone upon earth?"

She buried her face in her hands, while the big tears she did not seek to restrain made their way between her slender fingers. At this instant a slight rustling was heard amid the shrubs behind her. Andrée thought she heard a sigh. She turned, alarmed; a melancholy form stood before her. It was Gilbert.

CHAPTER XV.

GILBERT'S ROMANCE.

As pale, as despairing as Andrée, Gilbert stood downcast before her. At the sight of a man, and of a stranger, — for such he seemed at first sight through the thick veil of tears which obscured her gaze, — Andrée hastily dried her eyes, as if the proud young girl would have blushed to be seen weeping. She controlled her agitation, and restored calmness to her marble features, only an instant before quivering with the shudder of despair. Gilbert was much longer in regaining his calmness, and his features still wore an expression of grief when Mademoiselle de Taverney, looking up, at last recognized him.

"Oh! Monsieur Gilbert again!" said Andrée, with that trifling tone which she affected to assume whenever chance — as she believed — brought this young man into her presence.

Gilbert made no reply; his feelings were still too deeply moved. The grief which had shaken Andrée's frame to the centre had violently agitated his own. It was Andrée, therefore, who again broke the silence, wishing to have the last word with this apparition. "But what is the matter, Monsieur Gilbert," she inquired. "Why do you gaze at me in that woe-begone manner? Something must grieve you. May I ask what it is?"

"Do you wish to know?" asked Gilbert, mournfully, for he felt the irony concealed beneath this appearance of interest.

"Yes."

"Well, what grieves me, Mademoiselle, is to see you suffer," replied Gilbert.

"And who told you that I am suffering, Monsieur?"

"I see it."

"You mistake, Monsieur; I am not suffering," said Andrée, passing her handkerchief over her face.

Gilbert perceived the storm rising, but he resolved to turn it aside by humility. "I entreat your pardon, Mademoiselle," said he, "but I heard your sobs."

"Ah! you were listening; better and better!"

"Mademoiselle, it was by accident," stammered Gilbert, for he knew that he was telling a falsehood.

"Accident! I regret exceedingly, Monsieur Gilbert, that chance should have brought you here. But even so, may I ask in what manner these sobs which you heard me utter grieved you? Tell me that, if you please?"

"I cannot bear to see a woman weep," said Gilbert, in a tone which highly displeased Andrée.

"Am I then a woman in Monsieur Gilbert's eyes?" replied the haughty young girl. "I sue for no one's sympathy, but Monsieur Gilbert's still less than any other's."

"Mademoiselle," said Gilbert, sadly, "you do wrong to taunt me thus. I saw you sad, and I felt grieved. I heard you say that now Monsieur Philippe was gone, you would be alone in the world. Never, Mademoiselle! for I am beside you; and never did a heart beat more devoted to you. I repeat it, Mademoiselle de Taverney cannot be alone in the world while my head can think, my heart beat, or my arm retains its strength."

While he spoke these words Gilbert was indeed an example of manly strength and beauty, although he pronounced them with all the humility which the most sincere respect commanded. But it was fated that every-

thing which the young man did should displease Andrée, should offend her, and urge her to offensive retorts, — as if his very respect were an insult, and his prayers a provocation. At first she attempted to rise, that she might second her harsh words with as harsh gestures; but a nervous shudder retained her on her seat. Besides, she reflected that if she were standing, she could be seen from a distance, and seen talking to Gilbert. She therefore remained seated; for she was determined, once for all, to crush the importunate insect before her under foot. She therefore replied, —

"I thought I had already informed you, Monsieur Gilbert, that you are highly displeasing to me, that your voice annoys me, that your philosophical speeches disgust me. Then why, when you know this, do you still persist in addressing me?"

"Mademoiselle," replied Gilbert, pale, but self-possessed, "an honest-hearted woman is never disgusted by sympathy. An honest man is the equal of every human being; and I, whom you maltreat so cruelly, deserve, more than any other, perhaps, the sympathy which I regret to perceive you do not feel for me."

At this word "sympathy," thus twice repeated, Andrée opened her large eyes to their utmost extent, and fixed them impertinently upon Gilbert. "Sympathy!" said she; "sympathy between you and me, Monsieur Gilbert! In truth I was deceived in my opinion of you. I took you for insolent, and I find you are even less than that, — you are only an idiot."

"I am neither insolent nor an idiot," said Gilbert, with an apparent calm, which it must have caused his proud disposition much to assume. "No, Mademoiselle; nature has made me your equal, and chance has made you my debtor."



GILBERT'S ROMANCE

"Chance again!" said Andrée, sarcastically.

"Perhaps I should have said Providence. I never intended to speak to you of this, but your insults refresh my memory."

"I your debtor, Monsieur? Your debtor, I think you said? Explain yourself, Monsieur Gilbert."

"I should be ashamed to find you ungrateful, Mademoiselle. God, who has made you so beautiful, has given you, to compensate for your beauty, sufficient defects without that."

This time Andrée rose.

"Stay! pardon me!" said Gilbert; "at times you irritate me too much, and then I forget for a moment the interest with which you inspire me."

Andrée burst into a fit of laughter so prolonged that it was calculated to rouse Gilbert's anger to the utmost; but to her great surprise Gilbert did not take fire. He folded his arms on his breast, retained the same hostile and determined expression in his fiery glance, and patiently awaited the end of this insulting laugh.

"Mademoiselle," said Gilbert, coldly, "will you condescend to answer one question? Do you respect your father?"

"You take the liberty of catechising me, it seems, Monsieur Gilbert?" replied the young girl, with sovereign hauteur.

"Yes, you respect your father," continued Gilbert; "and it is not on account of his good qualities or his virtues, but simply because he gave you life. A father, unfortunately, — and you must know it, Mademoiselle, — is respected in only one relation; but still it gives him a claim. Even more; for this sole benefit,"— and Gilbert, in his turn, felt himself animated by an emotion of scornful pity, — "you are bound to love your benefactor.

Well, Mademoiselle, this being established as a principle, why do you insult me? why do you scorn me? why do you hate me, — me, who, it is true, did not give you life, but who saved it to you?"

"You!" exclaimed Andrée; "you saved my life?"

"Ah! you did not even dream of that," said Gilbert, "or rather you have forgotten it. That is very natural; it occurred nearly a year ago. Well, Mademoiselle, I must therefore inform you of it, or recall it to your memory. Yes, I saved your life at the risk of my own."

"At least, Monsieur Gilbert," said Andrée, deadly pale, "you will do me the favor of telling me when and where."

"The day, Mademoiselle, when a hundred thousand persons, crushed one against another, fleeing from the fiery horses, and the sabres which thinned the crowd, left a long train of dead and dying upon the Place Louis XV."

"Ah! the 30th of May?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

Andrée seated herself, and her features again assumed a pitiless smile. "And on that day, you say you risked your life to save mine, Monsieur Gilbert?"

"I have already told you so."

"Then you are the Baron Balsamo; I beg your pardon, I was not aware of it."

"No, I am not the Baron Balsamo," replied Gilbert, with flashing eye and quivering lip; "I am the poor child of the people, — Gilbert, who has the folly, the madness, the misfortune to love you; who, because he loved you like a madman, like a fool, like a sot, followed you into the crowd; who, separated from you for a moment, recognized you by the piercing shriek you uttered when you lost your footing; who, forcing his way to you, shielded you with his arms until twenty thousand arms, pressing against his, broke their strength; who threw himself upon

the stone wall against which you were about to be crushed, to afford you the softer repose of his corpse; and perceiving among the crowd that strange man who seemed to govern his fellow-men, and whose name you have just pronounced, collected all his strength, all his energy, and raised you in his exhausted arms that this man might see you, seize hold of you, and save you! — Gilbert, who in yielding you up to a more fortunate protector than himself, retained nothing but a shred of your dress, which he pressed to his lips! And it was time; for already the blood was rushing to his heart, to his temples, to his brain. The rolling tide of executioners and victims swept over him, and buried him beneath its waves, while you, like an angel of the resurrection, ascended from his abyss toward heaven."

Gilbert in these hurried words had shown himself as he was, — uncultivated, simple, almost sublime, in his resolution as in his love. Notwithstanding her contempt, Andrée could not refrain from gazing at him with astonishment. For a moment he believed that his narrative had been as irresistible as truth — as love. But poor Gilbert did not take into his calculations incredulity, — that insincerity of hatred. Andrée, who hated Gilbert, did not allow herself to be moved by any of the forcible arguments of her despised lover. She did not reply immediately, but looked at Gilbert, while something like a struggle took place in her mind.

The young man, therefore, ill at ease during this freezing silence, felt himself obliged to add, as a sort of peroration: "And now, Mademoiselle, do not detest me as you did formerly; for now it would not only be injustice, but ingratitude, to do so. I said so before, and I now repeat it."

At these words Andrée raised her haughty brow, and in

the most indifferent and cutting tone she asked: "How long, Monsieur Gilbert, did you remain under Monsieur Rousseau's tutelage?"

"Mademoiselle," said Gilbert, ingenuously, "I think about three months, without reckoning the few days of my illness, which was caused by the accident on the 30th of May."

"You misunderstand me," said she; "I did not ask you whether you had been ill or not, or what accidents you may have received. They add an artistic finish to your story, but otherwise they are of no importance to me. I merely wished to tell you that, having resided only three months with the illustrious author, you have profited well by his lessons, and that the pupil at his first essay composes romances almost worthy of his master."

Gilbert had listened with calmness, believing that Andrée was about to reply seriously to his impassioned narration; but at this stroke of cutting irony he fell from the summit of his buoyant hopes to the dust. "A romance!" murmured he, indignantly; "you treat what I have told you as a romance!"

"Yes, Monsieur," said Andrée, "a romance, — I repeat the word; only you did not force me to read it, — for that I have to thank you. I deeply regret that, unfortunately, I am not able to repay its full value; but I should make the attempt in vain, — the romance is invaluable."

"And this is your reply?" stammered Gilbert, a pang darting through his heart, and his eyes becoming dim from emotion.

"I do not reply at all, Monsieur," said Andrée, pushing him aside, that she might pass before him.

The fact was that Nicole had at that moment made her appearance at the end of the alley, calling her mistress while still a considerable distance off, in order not to in

terrupt this interview too suddenly, ignorant as she was as to who Andrée's companion might be, for she had not recognized Gilbert through the foliage. But as she approached, she saw the young man, recognized him, and stood astounded. She then repented not having made a detour, in order to overhear what Gilbert had to say to Mademoiselle de Taverney. The latter addressed her in a softened voice, as if to mark more strongly to Gilbert the haughtiness with which she had spoken to him.

"Well, child," said she, "what is the matter?"

"The Baron de Taverney and the Duc de Richelieu have come to present their respects to Mademoiselle," replied Nicole.

"Where are they?"

"In Mademoiselle's apartments."

"Come, then;" and Andrée moved away.

Nicole followed, not without throwing, as she passed, a sarcastic glance back at Gilbert, who, livid with agitation, and almost frantic with rage, shook his clenched hand in the direction of his departing enemy, and grinding his teeth, muttered: "Oh, creature without heart, without soul! I saved your life, I concentrated all my love on you, I extinguished every feeling which might offend what I called your purity; for in my madness you were to me a holy virgin, like the Virgin who is in heaven. Now that I have seen you more nearly, I find you are no more than a woman, and I am a man. Oh, one day or another, Andrée de Taverney, I shall avenge myself! I have had you twice in my power, and twice I have respected you. Andrée de Taverney, beware of the third time! Au revoir, Andrée." He rushed from the spot, bounding through the thickest of the shrubs like a young wolf wounded by the hunter, who turns and shows his sharp teeth and his bloodshot eyeballs.

CHAPTER XVI.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

WHEN she reached the opposite extremity of the alley, Andrée saw her father and the marshal walking up and down before the vestibule waiting for her. The two friends seemed in high spirits, and as they stood with their arms interlaced, presented a better representation of Orestes and Pylades than the court had ever witnessed. As Andrée approached, the two old men seemed still more joyous, and remarked to each other on her radiant beauty, heightened by her walk and by the emotion she had previously undergone.

The marshal saluted Andrée as he would have saluted a declared Madame Pompadour. This distinction did not escape Taverney, who was delighted at it; but it surprised Andrée by its mixture of respect and gallantry, for the cunning courtier could put as many shades of meaning into a bow as Covielle could put French phrases into a single Turkish word. Andrée returned the marshal's salutation, made one equally ceremonious to her father, and then, with fascinating grace, she invited both to follow her to her apartment.

The marshal admired the exquisite neatness, which was the only ornament of the furniture and architecture of this retreat. With a few flowers and a little white muslin, Andrée had made her rather gloomy chamber, not a palace, but a temple.

The duke seated himself upon an armchair covered with green chintz, beneath a Chinese cornucopia, from which

drooped bunches of perfumed acacia and maple, mingled with iris and Bengal roses. Taverney occupied a similar chair; and Andrée sank upon a folding stool, her arm resting on a harpsichord, also ornamented with flowers arranged in a large Dresden vase.

"Mademoiselle," said the marshal, "I come as the bearer, on the part of his Majesty, of the compliments which your charming voice and your musical talents drew from every auditor of yesterday's rehearsal. His Majesty feared to arouse jealousy by praising you too openly at the time, and he therefore charged me to express to you the pleasure you have caused him."

Andrée blushed; and her blush made her so lovely that the marshal proceeded, as if speaking on his own account. "The king has assured me," said he, "that he never saw any one at his court who united to such a high degree the gifts of mind and the charms of personal beauty."

"You forget those of the heart," said Taverney, with effusion; "Andrée is the best of daughters."

The marshal thought for a moment that his old friend was about to weep. Admiring deeply this display of paternal sensibility, he exclaimed: "The heart, alas! My dear friend, you alone can judge of the tenderness of which Mademoiselle's heart is capable. Were I but twenty-five years of age, I would lay my life and my fortune at her feet!"

Andrée did not yet know how to receive lightly a courtier's homage. Richelieu elicited from her only a murmur without significance.

"Mademoiselle," he continued, "the king requests you will accept a slight testimony of his satisfaction; and he has charged the baron, your father, to transmit it to you. What reply shall I make to his Majesty from you?"

"Monsieur," replied Andrée, animated by no feeling but

that respect which is due to a monarch from all his subjects, "assure his Majesty of my deep gratitude; tell him that he honors me too highly by deigning to think of me, and that I am not worthy the attention of so powerful a monarch."

Richelieu seemed in raptures at this reply, which Andrée pronounced with a firm voice, and without hesitation. He took her hand, kissed it respectfully, and devouring her with his eyes, "A royal hand," said he, "a fairy foot, — mind, purity, resolution. Ah, Baron, what a treasure! It is not a daughter whom you have, — it is a queen!"

With these words he retired, leaving Taverney alone with Andrée, his heart swelling with pride and hope.

Whoever had seen this advocate of antiquated theories, this sceptic, this scoffer, inhaling with delight the atmosphere of favor through its most disreputable channel, would have said that God had blinded at the same moment both his intellect and heart. Taverney alone might have replied, with reference to this change, "It is not I who have changed, — it is the times."

He remained, then, seated near Andrée, and could not help feeling somewhat embarrassed; for the young girl, with her air of unconquerable serenity, and her clear, limpid, unfathomable look, seemed as if she would penetrate his most secret thoughts.

"Did not Monsieur de Richelieu, Monsieur, say that his Majesty had intrusted you with a testimony of his satisfaction? May I ask what it is?"

"Ah!" thought Taverney, "she is curious, — so much the better! I could not have expected it. So much the better!"

He drew the casket, which the marshal had given him the evening before, slowly from his pocket, just as a kind papa produces a paper of bonbons or a toy, which the

children have devoured with their eyes before their hands can reach it.

"Here it is," said he.

"Ah, jewels!" said Andrée.

"Are they to your taste?"

It was a set of pearls of great value. Twelve large diamonds connected together the rows of pearls, while a diamond clasp, earrings, and a tiara of the same precious material, made the present worth at least thirty thousand crowns.

"Good heavens, father!" exclaimed Andrée.

"Well?"

"It is too handsome. The king has made some mistake. I should be ashamed to wear that. I have no dresses to match the splendor of these diamonds."

"Oh! complain of it, I beg!" said Taverney, ironically.

"You do not understand me, Monsieur. I regret that I cannot wear these jewels because they are too beautiful."

"The king, who gives the casket, Mademoiselle, is sufficiently the grand seigneur to add the dresses."

"But, Monsieur, this goodness on the king's part —"

"Do you not think I have deserved it by my services?"

"Ah! pardon me, Monsieur; that is true," said Andrée, drooping her head, but not quite convinced.

After a moment's reflection she closed the casket. "I shall not wear these diamonds," said she.

"And why not?" said Taverney, uneasily.

"Because, my dear father, you and my brother are in want of every necessity, and this superfluity offends my eyes when I think of your embarrassments."

Taverney smiled, and pressed her hand. "Oh!" said he, "do not think of that, my daughter. The king has

done more for me than for you. We are in favor, my dear child. It would neither be respectful as a subject nor grateful as a woman to appear before his Majesty without the present he has made you."

"I will obey, Monsieur."

"Yes, but you must obey as if it gave you pleasure to do so. These ornaments seem not to be to your taste."

"I am no judge of diamonds, Monsieur."

"Learn, then, that the pearls alone are worth fifty thousand francs."

Andrée clasped her hands. "Monsieur," said she, "it is most strange that his Majesty should make me such a present. Reflect!"

"I do not understand you, Mademoiselle," replied Taverney, dryly.

"If I wear these jewels, I assure you, Monsieur, every one will be greatly surprised."

"Why?" asked Taverney, in the same tone, and with a cold and imperious glance which made Andrée lower her eyes.

"I feel a scruple."

"Mademoiselle, you must confess that it is strange you should entertain scruples, when even I, your father, feel none. Give me your young modest girls for seeing evil and finding it out, however closely hidden it is, and when none other had remarked it! None like maidenly and simple girls for making old grenadiers like myself blush!"

Andrée hid her blushing face in her lovely white hands. "Oh! my brother," she murmured to herself, "why are you already so far away from me?"

Did Taverney hear these words, or did he divine their purport with that wonderful perspicacity which we know he possessed? We cannot tell; but he immediately changed his tone, and taking Andrée's hand in his,

"Come, my child," said he, "is not your father your friend?"

A sweet smile chased the shadow from Andrée's brow.

"Shall I not be here to love you, — to advise you? Are you not proud to contribute to my happiness and that of your brother?"

"Oh, yes!" said Andrée.

The baron fixed a caressing look upon his daughter.

"Well," said he, "you shall be, as Monsieur de Richelieu said just now, the queen of Taverney. The king has distinguished you, and the dauphiness also," added he, hastily. "In your intimacy with these two august personages, you will found our future fortunes by making them happy. The friend of the dauphiness and — of the king! What a glorious career! You have superior talents and unrivalled beauty, a pure and healthy mind, untainted by avarice and ambition. Oh, my child, what a part you might play! Do you remember the maiden who soothed the last moments of Charles VI.? Her name is cherished in France. Do you remember Agnes Sorel, who restored the honor of the French crown? All good Frenchmen respect her memory. Andrée, you will be the support of the old age of our glorious monarch. He will cherish you as his daughter, and you will reign in France by the divine right of beauty, courage, and fidelity!"

Andrée opened her eyes wide with astonishment. The baron resumed, without giving her time to reflect. "With a single look you will drive away these wretched creatures who dishonor the throne; your presence will purify the court. To your generous influence the nobility of the kingdom will owe the return of pure morals, politeness, and real gallantry. My daughter, you may be, you must be, the regenerating star of your country, and a crown of glory to your name."

"But," said Andrée, all bewildered, "what must I do to effect all this?"

The baron reflected for a moment. "Andrée," said he, "I have often told you that in this world you must force men to be virtuous by making them love virtue. Sullen, melancholy, sermonizing virtue makes even those fly who wish most to approach her. Lend to your virtue all the allurements of coquetry, — even of vice. It is an easy task for a talented and high-minded girl such as you are. Make yourself so lovely that the court will talk only of you; make yourself so agreeable to the king that he cannot do without you. Be so reserved and discreet toward all, except his Majesty, that people will soon attribute to you all that power which you cannot fail ultimately to obtain."

"I do not exactly understand your last advice," said Andrée.

"Trust yourself to my guidance; you will fulfil my wishes without understanding them, — the best plan for such a wise and generous creature as you are. But, by the by, to enable you to put in practice my first counsel, I must furnish your purse. Take these hundred louis-d'or and dress in a manner worthy of the rank to which you belong, since the king has done us the honor to distinguish us."

Taverney gave the hundred louis to his daughter, kissed her hand, and left her. He returned with rapid steps along the alley by which he had come, so much engrossed in his reflections that he did not perceive Nicole in close conference with a nobleman at the extremity of the Bosquet des Amours.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT ALTHOTAS WANTED TO COMPLETE HIS ELIXIR.

On the day after that on which this conversation took place, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, Balsamo was seated in his cabinet, in the Rue Saint Claude, occupied in reading a letter which Fritz had just brought him. The letter was without signature. He turned it over and over in his hands. "I know this writing," said he,—"large, irregular, slightly tremulous, and full of faults in orthography;" and he read it once more. It ran as follows:—

Monsieur le Comte,—A person who consulted you some time before the fall of the late ministry, and who had consulted you a long time previously, will wait upon you to-day, in order to have another consultation. Will your numerous occupations permit you to grant this person a quarter of an hour between four and five this evening?

After reading this for the second or third time, Balsamo fell back into his train of reflection. "It is not worth while to consult Lorenza for such a trifle," said he; "besides, can I no longer divine anything by myself? The writing is large,—a sign of aristocracy; irregular and trembling,—a sign of age; full of faults in orthography,—it must be a courtier. Ah, stupid creature that I am! it is the Duc de Richelieu. Most certainly I shall have an hour at your service, Monsieur le Duc,—an hour did I say?—a day! Make my time your own. Are you not,

without knowing it, one of my mysterious agents, one of my familiar demons? Do we not both pursue the same task? Do we not both shake the monarchy at the same time, — you by making yourself its presiding genius, I by declaring myself its enemy? Come, then, Duke, I am ready!" and Balsamo consulted his watch, to see how long he must yet wait for the duke.

At that moment a bell sounded in the cornice of the ceiling. "What can be the matter?" said Balsamo, starting. "Lorenza calls me; she wishes to see me. Can anything unpleasant have happened to her? or is it a return of those fits of passion which I have so often witnessed, and of which I have been at times the victim? Yesterday she was thoughtful, gentle, resigned; she was as I love to see her. Poor child! I must go to her." He arranged his dress, glanced at the mirror, to see if his hair was not too much in disorder, and proceeded toward the stairs, after having replied to Lorenza's request as she had made it, by ringing a bell.

But, according to his custom, Balsamo paused in the apartment adjoining that occupied by the young woman; and turning, with his arms crossed, toward the place where he supposed her to be, he commanded her to sleep, with that powerful will which recognized no obstacles. Then, as if doubting his own power, or as if he thought it necessary to redouble his precautions, he looked into the apartment through an almost imperceptible crevice in the woodwork.

Lorenza was sleeping upon a couch, where, no doubt, tottering under the influence of her master's will, she had sought a support for her sinking limbs. A painter could not have suggested a more poetic attitude. Panting and subdued beneath the power of the subtle fluid which Balsamo had poured upon her, Lorenza seemed like one of

those beautiful Ariadnes of Vanloo, with rounded breasts, and features expressive of fatigue or despair.

Balsamo entered by his usual passage, and stopped for a moment before her, to contemplate her sleeping countenance. He then awoke her; she was too dangerous thus.

As she opened her eyes, a piercing glance escaped from between the half-closed lids; then, as if to collect her scattered thoughts, she smoothed back her long hair with her hands, dried her lips, moist with slumber, and searching deeply her memory, she brought together her scattered recollections.

Balsamo looked at her with some anxiety. He had been long accustomed to the sudden transition from winning love to outbursts of anger and hatred; but this appearance, to which he was entirely unused, — the calmness with which Lorenza on this occasion received him, instead of with one of her customary bursts of hatred, — announced something more serious, perhaps, than he had yet witnessed.

Lorenza sat up on the couch; and fixing her deep, soft eyes upon Balsamo, she said, "Pray be good enough to take a seat near me."

Balsamo started at the sound of her voice, expressing, as it did, such unusual mildness.

"Near you!" said he. "You know, my Lorenza, that I have but one wish, — to pass my life at your feet."

"Monsieur," replied Lorenza, in the same tone, "I pray you to be seated, — although, indeed, I have not much to say to you; but, short as it is, I shall say it better, I think, if you are seated."

"Now, as ever, my beloved Lorenza, I will do as you wish;" and he took a chair near Lorenza, who was still seated upon the couch.

"Monsieur," said she, fixing her heavenly eyes upon Balsamo, "I have summoned you to request from you a favor."

"Oh, my Lorenza!" exclaimed Balsamo, more and more delighted, "anything you wish! Speak; you shall have everything!"

"I wish for only one thing; but I warn you that I wish for that most ardently."

"Speak, Lorenza, speak! should it cost my fortune, or half my life!"

"It will cost you nothing, Monsieur, but a moment of your time," replied the young woman.

Balsamo, enchanted with the turn the conversation was taking, was already tasking his fertile imagination to supply a list of those wishes which Lorenza was likely to form, and above all, those which he could satisfy. "She will, perhaps," thought he, "ask for a servant or a companion. Well, even this immense sacrifice — for it would compromise my secret and my friends — I will make, for the poor child is in truth very unhappy in her solitude. Speak quickly, my Lorenza!" said he aloud, with a smile full of love.

"Monsieur," said she, "you are aware that I am dying of melancholy and weariness."

Balsamo sighed, and bent his head in token of assent.

"My youth," continued Lorenza, "is wasting; my days are one long sigh, — my nights a continual terror. I am growing old in solitude and anguish."

"Your life is what you have made it, Lorenza," said Balsamo; "it is not my fault that this life which you have made so sad is not one to make a queen envious."

"Be it so. Therefore, you see, I have recourse to you in my distress."

"Thanks, Lorenza!"

"You are a good Christian, you have sometimes told me, although — "

"Although you think me a lost soul, you would say. I complete your thought, Lorenza."

"Suppose nothing except what I tell you, Monsieur; and I beg you will conjecture nothing."

"Proceed, then."

"Well, instead of leaving me buried in these angers and despairs, grant me, since I am of no service to you — "

She stopped to glance at Balsamo; but he had regained his command over himself, and she saw only a cold look and contracted brow. She became animated as she met his almost threatening eye. "Grant me," she continued, "not liberty, — for I know that the will of God, or rather your will, which seems all-powerful to me, condemns me to perpetual captivity, — but at least to see human faces, to hear other voices than yours; permit me, in short, to go out, to walk, to have a part in life."

"I had foreseen this request, Lorenza," said Balsamo, taking her hand; "and you know that long since your wish has been also my own."

"Well, then!" exclaimed Lorenza.

"But," resumed Balsamo, "you have yourself prevented it. Like a madman that I was, — and every man who loves is a madman, — I allowed you to penetrate into some of my secrets, both of science and politics. You know that Althotas has discovered the philosopher's stone, and seeks the elixir of life. You know that I and my companions conspire against the monarchies of the world. The first of these secrets would cause me to be burned as a sorcerer; the other would be sufficient to condemn me to be broken on the wheel for high treason. Besides, you have threatened me, Lorenza; you have told me that you

would try every means to regain your liberty, and this liberty once regained, that the first use you would make of it would be to denounce me to Monsieur de Sartines. Did you not say so?"

"What can you expect? At times I lash myself to fury, and then I am half-mad."

"Are you calm and sensible now, Lorenza; and can we converse quietly together?"

"I hope so."

"If I grant you the liberty you desire, shall I find in you a devoted and submissive wife, a faithful and gentle companion? You know, Lorenza, this is my most ardent wish."

The young woman was silent.

"In one word, will you love me?" asked Balsamo, with a sigh.

"I am unwilling to promise what I cannot perform," said Lorenza; "neither love nor hatred depends upon ourselves. I hope that God, in return for your good actions, will permit my hatred toward you to take flight, and love to return."

"Unfortunately, Lorenza, such a promise is not a guarantee which will enable me to trust you. I require a positive, sacred oath, to break which would be a sacrilege, — an oath which binds you in this world as in the next; which involves your death in this world and your damnation in that which is to come."

Lorenza was silent.

"Will you take this oath?"

Lorenza hid her face in her hands, and her breast heaved under the influence of contending emotions.

"Take this oath, Lorenza, as I shall dictate it, with the solemnity in which I shall clothe it, and you shall be free."

"What must I swear, Monsieur?"

"Swear that you will never, under any pretext, betray what has come to your knowledge relative to the secrets of Althotas."

"Yes, I will swear it."

"Swear that you will never divulge what you know of our political meetings?"

"I will swear that also."

"With the oath and in the form which I shall dictate?"

"Yes. Is that all?"

"No; swear, — and this is the principal thing, Lorenza! for the other matters would endanger only my life, while upon what I am about to say depends my entire happiness, — swear that you will never leave me, Lorenza! Swear this, and you are free!"

The young woman started as if cold steel had pierced her heart.

"And in what form must the oath be taken?"

"We will enter a church together, and communicate at the same altar. You will swear on the host never to betray anything relating to Althotas or my companions. You will swear never to leave me. We will then divide the host in two, and each will take the half, you swearing before God that you will never betray me, and I that I will ever do my utmost to make you happy."

"No!" said Lorenza; "such an oath is a sacrilege."

"An oath, Lorenza, is never a sacrilege," replied Balsamo, sadly, "but when you make it with the intention of not keeping it."

"I will not take this oath," said Lorenza; "I should fear to imperil my soul."

"It is not — I repeat it — in taking an oath that you imperil your soul; it is in breaking it."

"I will not do it."

"Then have patience, Lorenza," said Balsamo, without anger, but with the deepest sadness.

Lorenza's brow darkened like an overshadowed plain when a cloud passes between it and the sun.

"Ah! you refuse?" said she.

"Not so, Lorenza; it is you who refuse."

A nervous movement indicated all the impatience the young woman felt at these words.

"Listen, Lorenza!" said Balsamo. "This is what I will do for you, and, believe me, it is much."

"Speak," said the young girl, with a bitter smile. "Let me see how far that generosity of which you make so much will extend."

"God, chance, or fate — call it what you will, Lorenza, — has united us by an indissoluble bond; do not attempt to break this bond in this life, for death alone can accomplish that."

"Proceed; I know that," said Lorenza, impatiently.

"Well, in one week, Lorenza, — whatever it may cost me, and however great the sacrifice I make, — in one week you shall have a companion."

"Where?" asked she.

"Here."

"Here!" she exclaimed, "behind these bars; behind these inexorable doors, these iron doors? — a fellow-prisoner? Oh! you cannot mean it, Monsieur; that is not what I ask."

"Lorenza, it is all that I can grant."

The young woman made a more vehement gesture of impatience.

"My dear child," resumed Balsamo, mildly, "reflect a little; with a companion you will more easily support the weight of this necessary misfortune."

"You mistake, Monsieur. Until now I have grieved

only for myself, not for others. This trial only was wanting, and I see that you wish to make me undergo it. Yes, you will immure beside me a victim like myself; I shall see her grow thinner and paler, and pine away with grief, even as I do. I shall see her beat, as I do, these walls, that hateful door, which I examine twenty times each day to see where it opens to give you egress; and when my companion, your victim, has, like me, wounded her hands against the marble blocks in her endeavors to disjoin them; when, like me, she has worn out her eyelids with her tears; when she is dead as I am, in soul and mind, and you have two corpses in place of one, you will say, in your infernal benevolence: 'These two young creatures amuse themselves; they keep each other company; they are happy!' Oh! no, no, no! — a thousand times no!" And she passionately stamped her foot upon the floor, while Balsamo endeavored in vain to calm her.

"Come, Lorenza," said he, "I entreat you to show a little more mildness and calmness. Let us reason on the matter."

"He asks me to be calm, to be gentle, to reason! The executioner tells the victim whom he is torturing, to be gentle, and the innocent martyr to be calm!"

"Yes, Lorenza, I ask you to be gentle and calm, for your anger cannot change our destiny; it only embitters it. Accept what I offer you, Lorenza; I will give you a companion who will hug her chains, since they have procured for her your friendship. You shall not see a sad and tearful face, such as you fear, but smiles and gayety which will smooth your brow. Come, dear Lorenza, accept what I offer; for I swear to you that I cannot offer you more."

"That means that you will place near me a hireling, to whom you will say: 'I give you in charge a poor insane

creature, who is ill and about to die; soothe her, share her confinement, attend to her comforts, and I will recompense you when she is no more.'"

"Oh, Lorenza! Lorenza!"

"No, that is not it; I am mistaken," continued Lorenza, with bitter irony; "I conjecture badly. But what can you expect? I am so ignorant, I know so little of the world. You will say to the woman: 'Watch over the madwoman, she is dangerous; report all her actions, all her thoughts, to me. Watch over her, waking and sleeping.' And you will give her as much gold as she requires, for gold costs you nothing, — you make it!"

"Lorenza, you wander; in the name of Heaven, Lorenza, read my heart more truly! In giving you a companion, my beloved, I compromise such mighty interests that you would tremble for me if you did not hate me. In giving you a companion, I endanger my safety, my liberty, my life; and yet I will risk all that to save you a little weariness."

"Weariness!" exclaimed Lorenza, with a wild and frantic laugh which made Balsamo shudder. "He calls it weariness

"Well, suffering! Yes, you are right, Lorenza; they are poignant sufferings. I repeat, Lorenza, have patience. A day will come when all your sufferings will cease; a day will come when you shall be free and happy."

"Will you permit me to retire to a convent and take the vows?"

"To a convent?"

"I will pray, — first for you, and then for myself. I shall be closely confined, indeed, but I shall at least have a garden, air, space. I shall have a cemetery to walk in, and can seek beforehand among the tombs for the place of my repose. I shall have companions who grieve for their

own sorrows, and not for mine. Permit me to retire to a convent, and I will take any vows you wish. A convent, Balsamò! I implore you on my knees to grant this request."

"Lorenza, Lorenza! we cannot part. Mark me well, we are indissolubly connected in this world! Ask for nothing which exceeds the limits of this house."

Balsamo pronounced these last words in so calm and determined a tone that Lorenza did not even repeat the request. "Then you refuse me?" said she, dejectedly.

"I cannot grant it."

"Is what you say irrevocable?"

"It is."

"Well, I have something else then to ask," said she, with a smile.

"Oh! my dear Lorenza, smile again, and still again. With such a smile you will compel me to do all you wish!"

"Oh, yes! I shall make you do all that I wish, provided I do everything that pleases you. Well! be it so; I will be as reasonable as possible."

"Speak, Lorenza, speak!"

"Just now you said: 'One day, Lorenza, your sufferings shall cease; one day you shall be free and happy.'"

"Oh, yes! I said so; and I swear before Heaven that I await that day as impatiently as yourself."

"Well, this day may arrive immediately, Balsamo," said the young Italian, with a caressing smile, which her husband had hitherto seen only in her sleep. "I am weary, very weary, — you can understand my feelings; I am so young, and have already suffered so much! Well, my friend, — for you say you are my friend, — listen to me: grant me this happy day immediately."

"I hear you," said Balsamo, inexpressibly agitated.

"I end my appeal by the request I should have made at the commencement, Acharat." The young woman shuddered.

"Speak, my beloved!"

"Well, I have often remarked, when you made experiments on some unfortunate animal, and when you told me that these experiments were necessary to the cause of humanity, — I have often remarked that you possessed the secret of inflicting death, sometimes by a drop of poison, sometimes by an opened vein; that this death was calm, rapid as lightning, and that these unfortunate and innocent creatures, condemned, as I am, to the miseries of captivity, were instantly liberated by death, — the first blessing they had received since their birth. Well —" She stopped, and turned pale.

"Well, my Lorenza?" repeated Balsamo.

"Well, what you sometimes do to these unfortunate animals for the interest of science, do now to me in the name of humanity. Do it for a friend, who will bless you with her whole heart, who will kiss your hands with the deepest gratitude, if you grant her what she asks. Do it, Balsamo, for me, who kneel here at your feet, who promise you with my last sigh more love and happiness than you have awakened in me during my whole life, — for me, Balsamo, who promise you a frank and beaming smile as I leave this earth! By the soul of your mother, by the sufferings of our Blessed Lord, by all that is holy and solemn and sacred in the world of the living and of the dead, I implore you, kill me, kill me!"

"Lorenza!" exclaimed Balsamo, taking her in his arms as she rose after uttering these last words, "Lorenza, you are delirious. Kill you, — you! my love! my life!"

Lorenza disengaged herself by a violent effort from Balsamo's grasp, and fell on her knees. "I will never

rise," said she, "until you have granted my request. Kill me without a shock, without violence, without pain. Grant me this favor, since you say you love me; send me to sleep as you have often done, — only, take away the awaking; it is despair!"

"Lorenza, my beloved!" said Balsamo. "O God! do you not see how you torture my heart? What! you are really so unhappy, then? Come, my Lorenza, rise; do not give way to despair. Alas! do you hate me then so very much?"

"I hate slavery, constraint, solitude; and as you make me a slave, unhappy, and solitary, — well, yes, I hate you!"

"But I love you too dearly to see you die, Lorenza. You shall not die, therefore; I will effect the most difficult cure I have yet undertaken, my Lorenza, — I will make you love life."

"No, no, that is impossible; you have made me long for death."

"Lorenza, for pity's sake! — I promise that soon — "

"Life or death!" exclaimed the young woman, becoming more and more excited. "This is the decisive day. Will you give me life, — that is to say, liberty? Will you give me death, — that is to say, repose?"

"Life, my Lorenza, life!"

"Then that is liberty."

Balsamo was silent.

"If not, death, — a gentle death; by a draught, a needle's point, — death during sleep! Repose, repose, repose!"

"Life and patience, Lorenza!"

Lorenza burst into a terrible laugh, and making a spring backward, drew from her bosom a knife, with a blade so fine and sharp that it glittered in her hand like a flash of lightning.

Balsamo cried out, but he was too late. When he rushed forward, when he reached the hand, the arm had already described its course, and had fallen on Lorenza's breast. Balsamo had been dazzled by the flash; he was blinded by the sight of blood. In his turn he uttered a terrible cry, and seized Lorenza round the waist, meeting midway her arm descending to deal a second blow, and grasping the weapon in his undefended hand. Lorenza with a mighty effort drew the weapon away, and the sharp blade glided through Balsamo's fingers. The blood streamed from his mutilated hand.

Then, instead of continuing the struggle, Balsamo extended his bleeding hand toward the young woman, and said, with a voice of irresistible command: "Sleep, Lorenza, sleep! I will it."

But on this occasion her irritation was such that her obedience was not as prompt as usual.

"No, no," murmured Lorenza, tottering and attempting to strike again. "No, I will not sleep!"

"Sleep, I tell you!" said Balsamo, a second time, advancing a step toward her; "sleep, I command it!"

This time the power of Balsamo's will was so great that all resistance was in vain. Lorenza heaved a sigh, let the knife fall from her hand, and sank back upon the cushions. Her eyes still remained open, but their threatening glare gradually died away, and finally they closed; her stiffened neck drooped; her head fell upon her shoulder like that of a wounded bird; a nervous shudder passed through her frame, — Lorenza was asleep.

Balsamo hastily opened her robe, and examined the wound, which seemed to him slight, although the blood flowed from it freely. He then pressed the lion's eye, the spring acted, and tho back of the fireplace opened; then, detaching the counterpoise which made the trap-door of

Althotas's chamber descend, he leaped upon it, and mounted to the old man's laboratory.

"Ah! it is you, Acharat?" said the latter, who was still seated in his armchair. "You are aware that in a week I shall be a hundred years old. You are aware that before that time I must have the blood of a child, or of a virgin."

But Balsamo heard nothing. He hastened to the cupboard in which the magic balsams were kept, seized one of the phials of which he had often proved the efficacy, again mounted upon the trap, stamped his foot, and descended to the lower apartment.

Althotas rolled his armchair to the mouth of the trap, with the intention of seizing Balsamo by his garments. "Do you hear, unhappy man?" said he; "do you hear? If in a week I have not a child or a virgin to complete my elixir, I am a dead man!"

Balsamo turned; the old man's eyes seemed to glare in the midst of his unearthly and motionless features, as if they alone were alive. "Yes, yes," he replied, — "yes, be calm; you shall have what you want." He touched the spring, and the trap mounted again, fitting like an ornament in the ceiling of the room. Then he rushed into Lorenza's apartment, which he had just reached when Fritz's bell rang.

"Monsieur de Richelieu!" muttered Balsamo. "Oh! duke and peer as he is, he must wait."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MONSIEUR DE RICHELIEU'S TWO DROPS OF WATER.

Monsieur de Richelieu left the house in the Rue Saint Claude at half-past four. What his errand with Balsamo was, will appear in what follows.

Monsieur de Taverney had dined with his daughter, as the dauphiness had given her leave to absent herself on this day in order that she might receive her father. They were at dessert, when Monsieur de Richelieu, ever the bearer of good news, made his appearance to announce to his friend that the king had declared that very morning that he would give not merely a company to Philippe, but a regiment. Taverney was exuberant in his expressions of joy, and Andrée warmly thanked the marshal.

The conversation took a turn which may be easily imagined after what had passed; Richelieu spoke of nothing but the king, Andrée of nothing but her brother, and Taverney of nothing but Andrée. The latter announced in the course of conversation that she was set at liberty from her attendance on the dauphiness; that her Royal Highness was receiving a visit from two German princes, her relations; and that in order to pass a few hours of liberty with them, which might remind her of the court of Vienna, Marie Antoinette had dismissed all ner attendants, even her lady of honor, — which had so deeply shocked Madame de Noailles that she had gone to lay her grievances at the king's feet.

Taverney was, he said, delighted at this freedom of Andrée, since he had thus an opportunity of conversing with her about many things relating to their fortune and name. This observation made Richelieu propose to retire, in order to leave the father and daughter quite alone : but Mademoiselle de Taverney would not permit it ; he therefore remained.

Richelieu was in a vein of moralizing ; he painted most eloquently the degradation into which the French nobility had fallen, forced as they were to submit to the ignominious yoke of those favorites of chance, those contraband queens, instead of burning incense to the favorites of the olden times, who were almost as noble as their august lovers, — women who reigned over the sovereign by their beauty and their love, and over his subjects by their rank, their strength of mind, and their loyal and pure patriotism.

Andrée was surprised at the close analogy between Richelieu's words and those she had heard from the Baron de Taverney a few days previously.

Richelieu then launched into a theory of virtue so spiritual, so pagan, so French that Andrée was obliged to confess that she was not at all virtuous according to Monsieur de Richelieu's theories, and that true virtue, as the marshal understood it, was the virtue of Madame de Châteauroux, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and Mademoiselle de Fosseuse.

From argument to argument, from proof to proof, Richelieu at last became so clear that Andrée no longer understood a word of what he said. On this footing the conversation continued until about seven o'clock in the evening, when the marshal rose, being obliged, as he said, to pay his court to the king at Versailles. In passing through the apartment to take his hat, he met Nicole, who had always something to do wherever Monsieur de Riche-

lieu was. "My girl," said he, tapping her on the shoulder, "you shall see me out. I want you to carry a bouquet which Madame de Noailles cut for me in her garden, and which she commissioned me to present to the Comtesse d'Egmont."

Nicole bowed like the peasant girls in Monsieur Rousseau's comic operas, whereupon the marshal took leave of father and daughter, exchanged a significant glance with Taverney, made a bow to Andrée which was quite juvenile in its graceful ease, and retired.

With the reader's permission we will leave the baron and Andrée conversing about the fresh mark of favor conferred on Philippe, and follow the marshal. In this way we shall discover what was his errand at the Rue Saint Claude, where he arrived at such a fearful moment. Besides, the moralizing of the baron even surpassed that of his friend the marshal, and might startle ears less pure than Andrée's, which would perhaps partly understand it.

Richelieu descended the stairs leaning on Nicole's shoulder; and as soon as they were in the garden he stopped, and looking her in the face said: "Ah! little one, so we have a lover?"

"I, Monsieur le Maréchal!" exclaimed Nicole, blushing crimson, and retreating a step.

"Oh! perhaps you are not called Nicole Legay?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Maréchal."

"Well, Nicole Legay has a lover."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes, faith! a certain good-looking rascal whom she used to meet in the Rue Coq-Héron, and who has followed her to Versailles."

"Monsieur le Duc, I swear to you —"

"A sort of officer, called — Shall I tell you, child, the name of Mademoiselle Legay's lover?"

Nicole's last hope was that the marshal was ignorant of the name of that happy mortal.

"Oh, yes, Monsieur le Maréchal! tell me, since you have made a beginning."

"Who is called Monsieur de Beausire," repeated the marshal, "and who in truth does not belie his name."

Nicole clasped her hands with an affectation of prudery which did not in the least impose on Richelieu. "It seems," said he, "we make appointments with him at Trianon. *Peste!* in a royal chateau, — that is a serious matter. One may be discharged for these freaks, my sweet one; and Monsieur de Sartines sends all young ladies who are discharged from the royal chateau to the Salpêtrière."

Nicole began to be uneasy.

"Monseigneur," said she, "I swear to you that if Monsieur Beausire boasts of being my lover, he is a fool and a villain; for indeed I am innocent."

"I shall not contradict you," said Richelieu; "but have you made appointments with him, or not?"

"Monseigneur, a rendezvous is no proof of — "

"Have you, or have you not? Answer me."

"Monseigneur — "

"You have. Very well; I do not blame you, my dear child. Besides, I like pretty girls who make use of their attractions, and I have always assisted them in so doing to the utmost of my power. Only, as your friend and protector, I warn you."

"But have I been seen, then?" asked Nicole.

"It seems so, since I know about it."

"Monseigneur," said Nicole, resolutely, "I have not been seen; it is impossible!"

"As to that, I know nothing; but the report is very prevalent, and must tend to fasten attention on your mis-

tress. Now, you must be aware that being more the friend of the Taverneys than of the Legays, it is my duty to give the baron a hint."

"Oh, Monseigneur!" exclaimed Nicole, terrified at the turn the conversation was taking, "you will ruin me! Although innocent, I shall be discharged on the mere suspicion."

"Well, my poor child, you will be discharged, then; for even now some evil-minded person or other, having taken offence at these meetings, innocent though they be, has informed Madame de Noailles of them."

"Madame de Noailles, — good heavens!"

"Yes; you see the danger is urgent."

Nicole clasped her hands in despair.

"It is unfortunate, I am aware," said Richelieu; "but what the devil can you do about it?"

"And you, who said just now you were my protector, — you, who have proved yourself to be such, — can you no longer protect me?" asked Nicole, with a wheedling cunning worthy of a woman of thirty years.

"Yes, *pardieu!* I can protect you."

"Well, Monseigneur?"

"Yes; but I will not."

"Oh, Monsieur le Duc!"

"Yes, you are pretty, I know that, and your beautiful eyes say all sorts of things to me; but I have lately become rather blind, my poor Nicole, and I no longer understand the language of lovely eyes. Once I would have offered you an asylum in my pavilion of Hanovre; but now it would be of no use, — it is not even to be spoken of."

"Yet you have once already taken me there," said Nicole, angrily.

"Ah! that is ungrateful in you, Nicole, to reproach me

with having taken you there, when I did so to render you a service; for, confess that without Monsieur Rafté's assistance, who made you a charming brunette, you would never have entered Trianon, — which, after all, perhaps, would have been better than to be dismissed from it now. But why the devil did you give a rendezvous to Monsieur de Beausire, and at the very gate of the stables too?"

"So you know that also?" said Nicole, who saw that she must change her tactics, and place herself at the marshal's discretion.

"*Parbleu!* you see that I know it, and Madame de Noailles too. This very evening you have a rendezvous —"

"That is true, Monsieur le Duc; but, on my faith, I will not go."

"Of course, you are warned; but Monsieur de Beausire will go. He is not warned, and he will be seized. Then, as he will not like, of course, to be taken for a thief and be hanged, or for a spy and be whipped, he will prefer to say, — especially as there is no disgrace in confessing it, — 'Unhand me; I am the lover of the pretty Nicole!'"

"Monsieur le Duc, I will send to warn him."

"Impossible, my poor child! by whom could you send? By him who betrayed you, perhaps?"

"Alas! that is true," said Nicole, feigning despair.

"What a becoming thing remorse is!" exclaimed Richelieu.

Nicole covered her face with her hands, taking care, however, to leave space enough between her fingers to allow her to observe every look and gesture of Richelieu.

"You are really adorable!" said the duke, whom none of these little tricks could escape. "Why am I not fifty years younger? No matter, *parbleu!* Nicole, I will bring you out of the scrape."

"Oh, Monseigneur! if you do that, my gratitude —"

"I don't want it, Nicole. On the contrary, I shall give you most disinterested assistance."

"Oh, how good of you, Monseigneur! I thank you from the bottom of my heart!"

"Do not thank me yet; as yet you know nothing. What the devil! wait till you hear more."

"I will submit to anything, provided Mademoiselle Andrée does not dismiss me."

"Ah! then your heart is set on remaining at Trianon?"

"By all means, Monseigneur."

"Well, Nicole, in the very first place, get rid of this feeling."

"But why so, if I am not discovered, Monsieur le Duc?"

"Whether you are discovered or not, you must leave Trianon."

"Oh! why?"

"I will tell you: because if Madame de Noailles has found you out, no one, not even the king, can save you."

"Ah, if I could only see the king!"

"Well, really, little one, that indeed would be sufficient. In the second place, even if you are not found out, I myself shall cause your departure."

"You?"

"Immediately."

"In truth, Monsieur le Maréchal, I do not understand you."

"It is as I have had the honor of telling you."

"And that is your protection, is it?"

"If you do not wish for it, there is yet time; you have only to say the word, Nicole."

"Oh, yes, Monsieur le Duc! on the contrary, I do wish for it."

"And I will grant it."

"Well?"

"Well, this is what I will do for you. Hark ye!"

"Speak, Monseigneur!"

"Instead of getting you discharged, and perhaps imprisoned, I will make you free and rich."

"Free and rich?"

"Yes."

"And what must I do in order to be free and rich? Tell me quickly, Monsieur le Maréchal!"

"Almost nothing."

"But what —"

"What I am about to tell you."

"Is it difficult?"

"Mere child's play."

"Then," said Nicole, "there is something to do?"

"Ah, of course! you know the motto of the world, Nicole, — 'Nothing for nothing.'"

"And that which I have to do, is it for myself, or for you?"

The Duke looked at Nicole. "*Tudieu!*" said he; "the little masker, how cunning she is!"

"Well, finish, Monsieur le Duc."

"Well! it is for yourself," replied he, boldly.

"Ah!" said Nicole, who, perceiving that the marshal had need of her services, already feared him no longer, while her ingenious brain was busily endeavoring to discover the truth amid the windings which, from habit, her companion always used; "what shall I have to do for myself, Monsieur le Duc?"

"This: Monsieur de Beausire comes at half-past seven does he not?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Maréchal, that is his time."

"It is now ten minutes past seven."

"That is also true."

"If I say the word he will be arrested."

"Yes, but you will not say it."

"No. You will go to him and tell him. But in the first place, Nicole, do you love this young man?"

"Why, I have given him a rendezvous."

"That is no reason; you may wish to marry him. Women take such strange caprices."

Nicole burst into a loud laugh. "I marry him!" said she. "Ha! ha! ha!"

Richelieu was astounded: he had not, even at court, met many women of this stamp.

"Well," said he, "so be it. You do not wish to marry him, but you love him. So much the better."

"Agreed! I love Monsieur de Beausire. Let us take that for granted, Monseigneur, and proceed!"

"*Peste!* what strides you make!"

"Of course. You may readily imagine that I am anxious to know what remains for me to do."

"In the first place, since you love him, you must fly with him."

"Oh! if you absolutely insist upon it, I suppose I must."

"Oh, oh! I insist upon nothing; not so fast, little one."

Nicole saw that she was going too far, and that as yet she had neither the secret nor the money of her cunning opponent. She stooped, therefore, only to rise again afterward.

"Monseigneur," said she, "I await your orders."

"Well! you must go to Monsieur de Beausire and say to him: 'We are discovered; but I have a protector who will save you from Saint Lazare, and me from the Salpêtrière. Let us fly.'"

Nicole looked at Richelieu. "Fly?" she repeated.

Richelieu understood her cunning and expressive look. "*Parbleu!*" said he, "of course I shall pay the expenses."

Nicole asked for no further explanation. It was plain that she would know all, since she was to be paid.

The marshal saw what an important point Nicole had gained, and hastened to say all he had to say, just as a gambler is eager to pay when he has lost, in order to get through the disagreeable task.

"Do you know what you are thinking of, Nicole?" said he.

"Faith, no," replied the girl; "but I suppose you, Monsieur le Maréchal, who know so many things, have divined it."

"Nicole," he replied, "you were reflecting that if you fled, your mistress might require you during the night; and not finding you, might give the alarm, which would expose you to the risk of being overtaken and seized."

"No," said Nicole, "I was not thinking of that; because, on reflection, Monseigneur, I would prefer remaining here."

"But if Monsieur de Beausire is taken?"

"Well, I cannot help it."

"But if he confess?"

"Let him confess."

"Ah!" said Richelieu, beginning to be uneasy, "but in that case you are lost."

"No; for Mademoiselle Andrée is kindness itself, and as she loves me at heart, she will speak to the king for me. So, even if Monsieur de Beausire is punished, I shall not share his punishment."

The marshal bit his lips.

"Nicole," said he, "I tell you you are a fool. Mademoiselle Andrée is not on good terms with the king, and

I will have you arrested immediately if you do not listen to me as I wish. Do you hear, you little viper?"

"Oh, oh! Monseigneur, my head is neither flat nor horned. I listen, but I form my own conclusions."

"Good! Then you will go at once and arrange your plan of flight with Monsieur de Beausire."

"But how? Do you imagine, Monsieur le Maréchal, that I shall expose myself to the risk of flight, when you tell me yourself that Mademoiselle might awake, might ask for me, give the alarm, and a great deal more which I did not think of, but which you, Monseigneur, who are a man of experience, have foreseen?"

Richelieu bit his lip again; but this time more deeply than before. "Well, you rogue," said he, "if I have thought of these consequences, I have also thought of how to avoid them."

"And how will you manage to prevent Mademoiselle from calling me?"

"By preventing her awaking."

"Bah! she awakes ten times during the night; impossible!"

"Then she has the same malady that I have?" said Richelieu, calmly.

"The same that you have?" said Nicole, laughing.

"Yes. I also awake ten times every night, only I have a remedy for this sleeplessness. She must do as I do, or if not, you must do it for her."

"What do you mean, Monseigneur."

"What does your mistress take in the evening before she goes to bed?"

"What does she take?"

"Yes, it is the fashion now to guard thus against thirst. Some take orangeade or lemonade; others eau-de-mélisse; others —"

"Mademoiselle drinks only a glass of pure water in the evening before going to bed, — sometimes sweetened and flavored with orange-water, if her nerves are weak."

"Ah, excellent!" said Richelieu; "just as I do myself. My remedy will suit her admirably."

"How so?"

"I pour one drop of a certain liquid into my beverage, and I then sleep all night."

Nicole tasked her brain to discover to what end the marshal's diplomacy tended.

"You do not answer?" said he.

"I was just thinking that Mademoiselle has not your cordial."

"I will give you some."

"Ah!" thought Nicole, seeing at last a ray of light through the darkness.

"You must put two drops of it in your mistress's glass, — neither more nor less, remember; and she will sleep soundly, so that she will not call you, and consequently you will have time to escape."

"Oh! if that is all, it is very simple."

"You will give her the two drops?"

"Certainly."

"You promise me?"

"I presume it is for my own interest to do so; besides, I will lock the door so carefully —"

"By no means," said Richelieu, hastily; "that is exactly what you must not do. On the contrary, you must leave the door of her chamber open."

"Ah!" exclaimed Nicole, with an inward illumination; she now understood all. Richelieu saw it plainly. "Is that all?" she inquired.

"Absolutely all. Now you may go and tell your soldier to pack up his trunks."

"Unfortunately, Monsieur, it would be useless to tell him to fill his purse."

"You know that is my affair."

"Yes, I remember your lordship was kind enough to say — "

"Come, Nicole, how much do you want?"

"For what?"

"For pouring out those two drops of water."

"For that, nothing, Monseigneur, since you assure me I pour them out for my own advantage; it would not be just that you should pay me for attending to my own interest. But for leaving Mademoiselle's door open, — ah! for that, I warn you, I must have a good round sum."

"In one word, how much?"

"I must have twenty thousand francs, Monseigneur."

Richelieu started. "Nicole," said he, with a sigh, "you will go far."

"I ought to do so, Monseigneur, for I begin to believe, with you, that they will pursue me; but with your twenty thousand francs I shall make the journey."

"Go and warn Monsieur de Beausire, Nicole; and when you return, I will give you the money."

"Monseigneur, Monsieur de Beausire is very incredulous, and he will not believe what I tell him, unless I can give him proofs."

Richelieu pulled out a handful of bank-notes from his pocket. "Here is something on account," said he; "and in this purse there are a hundred double louis."

"Monseigneur will settle the account in full and give me the balance then when I have spoken to Monsieur de Beausire?"

"No, *pardieu!* I will settle it on the spot. You are a careful girl, Nicole; it will bring you good fortune."

And Richelieu handed her the promised sum, partly in bank-notes, and partly in louis-d'or and half-louis.

"There!" said he; "is that right?"

"I think so," said Nicole. "And now, Monseigneur, I want only the principal thing."

"The cordial?"

"Yes; of course your lordship has a flask?"

"I have my own, which I always carry about with me."

Nicole smiled. "And then," said she, "Trianon is locked every night, and I have not a key."

"But I have one, as first gentleman of the chamber."

"Ah, really?"

"Here it is."

"How fortunate all this is!" said Nicole; "it is one succession of miracles. And now, Monsieur le Duc, adieu!"

"Why adieu?"

"Certainly. I shall not see your lordship again, since I shall go as soon as Mademoiselle is asleep."

"Quite right. Adieu, then, Nicole!"

And Nicole, laughing in her sleeve, disappeared in the increasing darkness.

"I shall still succeed," said Richelieu. "But in truth it would seem that I am getting old, and fortune is turning against me. I have been outwitted by this little one. But what matters it, if I return the blow!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FLIGHT.

NICOLE was a conscientious girl. She had received Monsieur de Richelieu's money, and received it in advance too; and she felt anxious to prove herself worthy of this confidence by earning her pay. She ran, therefore, as quickly as possible to the gate, where she arrived at forty minutes past seven, instead of at half-past. Now, Monsieur de Beausire, who, being accustomed to military discipline, was a punctual man, had been waiting there for ten minutes. About ten minutes before, too, Monsieur de Taverney had left his daughter, and Andrée was consequently alone. Now, being alone, the young girl had closed the blinds.

Gilbert, as usual, was gazing eagerly at Andrée from his attic; but it would have been difficult to say whether his eyes sparkled with love or with hatred. When the blinds were closed, Gilbert could see nothing. Consequently, he looked in another direction; and thus looking, he perceived Monsieur de Beausire's plume, and recognized the officer, who was walking up and down, whistling an air to kill time while he was waiting.

In about ten minutes — that is to say, at forty minutes past seven — Nicole made her appearance. She exchanged a few words with Monsieur de Beausire, who made a gesture with his head as a sign that he understood her, and disappeared by the shady alley which led to

Petit Trianon. Nicole, light as a bird, returned in the direction from which she had come.

"Oh, oh!" thought Gilbert. "Monsieur the officer, and Mademoiselle the waiting-maid, have something to do or to say which they fear to have witnessed. Very good!"

Gilbert no longer felt any interest in respect to Nicole's movements; but actuated by the idea that the young girl was his natural enemy, he merely sought to collect a mass of proofs against her morality, with which he might successfully repulse any attack, should she attempt one against him. And as he knew the campaign might begin at any moment, like a prudent soldier he collected his munitions of war.

A rendezvous with a man in the very grounds of Trianon was one of the weapons which a cunning enemy such as Gilbert could not neglect, especially when it was imprudently placed under his very eyes. He consequently wished to have the testimony of his ears as well as that of his eyes, and to catch some fatally compromising phrase which would completely floor Nicole at the first onset. He quickly descended from his attic, therefore, hastened along the passage-way, and gained the garden by the chapel stairs. Once in the garden, he had nothing to fear, for he knew all its hiding-places as a fox knows his cover. He glided beneath the linden-trees, then along the espalier, until he reached a small thicket situated about twenty paces from the spot where he counted upon seeing Nicole. As he had foreseen, Nicole was there. Scarcely had he installed himself in the thicket when a strange noise reached his ears. It was the chink of gold upon stone, — that metallic sound of which nothing except the reality can give a correct idea.

Like a serpent Gilbert glided along to a raised terrace,

surmounted by a hedge of lilacs, which at that season (early in May) diffused their perfume around, and showered down their flowers upon those who took the shady alley on their way from Grand to Petit Trianon.

Having reached this retreat, Gilbert, whose eyes were accustomed to pierce the darkness, saw Nicole emptying the purse, which Monsieur de Richelieu had given her, upon a stone on the inner side of the gate, and prudently placed out of Monsieur de Beausire's reach. The large louis-d'or came forth from it in bright profusion, while Monsieur de Beausire, with sparkling eye and trembling hand, looked at Nicole and her louis-d'or as if he could not comprehend how the one should possess the other.

Nicole spoke first. "You have more than once, my dear Monsieur de Beausire," said she, "proposed to elope with me."

"And even to marry you," exclaimed the enthusiastic officer.

"Oh, my dear Monsieur! that is a matter of course; just now flight is the most important point. Can we fly in two hours?"

"In ten minutes, if you like."

"No; I have something to do first, which will occupy me two hours."

"In two hours, as in ten minutes, I shall be at your orders, my love."

"Very well. Take these fifty louis." Nicole counted out the fifty louis, and handed them through the gate to Monsieur de Beausire, who, without counting them, stuffed them into his waistcoat pocket. "And in an hour and a half," she continued, "be here with a carriage."

"But —" objected Beausire.

"Oh! if you do not wish, forget what has passed between us, and give me back my fifty louis."

"I do not shrink, dear Nicole, but I fear the future."

"For whom?"

"For you."

"For me?"

"Yes; the fifty louis once vanished, — and vanished they will soon be, — you will complain, you will regret Trianon, you will —"

"Oh, how thoughtful you are, dear Monsieur de Beausire! But fear nothing; I am not one of those women who are easily made miserable. Have no scruples on that score; when the fifty louis are gone, we shall see;" and she shook the purse which contained the other fifty.

Beausire's eyes were absolutely phosphorescent. "I would charge through a blazing furnace for your sake!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, well, well, I shall not require so much from you, Monsieur de Beausire! Then it is agreed that you will be here with the chaise in an hour and a half, and in two hours we will fly?"

"Agreed!" exclaimed Beausire, seizing Nicole's hand, and drawing it through the gate to kiss it.

"Hush!" said Nicole, "are you mad?"

"No, I am in love."

"Hum!" muttered Nicole.

"Do you not believe me, sweetheart?"

"Yes, yes, I believe you. Above all, be sure to have good horses."

"Oh, yes!"

They separated. But a moment afterward Beausire returned, quite alarmed. "Hist!" he whispered.

"Well, what is it?" asked Nicole, already some distance off, and putting her hand to her mouth, so as to convey her voice farther.

"And the gate?" asked Beausire; "will you creep under it."

"How stupid he is!" murmured Nicole, who at this moment was not ten paces distant from Gilbert. Then she added in a louder tone, "I have the key."

Beausire uttered a prolonged "oh!" of admiration, and this time took to his heels for good. Nicole hastened back with drooping head and nimble step to her mistress.

Gilbert, now left sole master of the field, put the following four questions to himself: —

"Why does Nicole fly with Beausire, when she does not love him?

"How does Nicole come to possess such a large sum of money?

"Why has Nicole the key of the gate?

"Why does Nicole return to Andrée when she might go at once?"

Gilbert found an answer to the second question, but to the others he could find none. Thus checked at the outset, his natural curiosity and his acquired distrust were so much excited that he determined to remain in the cold, beneath the dew-covered trees, to await the end of this scene, of which he had witnessed the beginning.

Andrée had conducted her father to the barriers of Grand Trianon, and was returning alone and pensive, when Nicole appeared issuing from the alley leading to the famous gate where she had been concerting her measures with Monsieur Beausire.

Nicole stopped on perceiving her mistress, and upon a sign which Andrée made to her, she followed her to her apartment. It was now about half-past eight in the evening. The night had closed in earlier than usual; for a huge cloud, sweeping from south to north, had overspread the whole sky, and all around, as far as the eye

could reach over the lofty forest of Versailles, the gloomy shroud was gradually enveloping in its folds the stars, a short time before sparkling in the azure dome. A light breeze swept along the ground, breathing warmly on the drooping flowers, which bent their heads, as if imploring heaven to send them rain or dew.

The threatening aspect of the sky did not hasten Andrée's steps; on the contrary, melancholy and thoughtful, the young girl seemed to ascend each step leading to her room with regret, and she paused at every window as she passed, to gaze at the sky, so much in harmony with her saddened mood, and thus to delay her return to her own little retreat.

Nicole, impatient, angry, fearing that some whim might detain her mistress beyond the usual hour, grumbled and muttered, as servants never fail to do when their masters are imprudent enough to satisfy their own caprices at the expense of those of their domestics.

At last Andrée reached the door of her chamber, and sank rather than seated herself upon a couch, gently ordering Nicole to leave the window, which looked upon the court, half-open. Nicole obeyed; then, returning to her mistress with that affectionate air which the flatterer could so easily assume, she said: "I fear Mademoiselle feels ill this evening; her eyes are red and swollen, yet bright. I think that Mademoiselle is in great need of repose."

"Do you think so?" asked Andrée, who had scarcely listened; and she carelessly placed her feet upon a cushion of tapestry-work.

Nicole took this as an order to undress her mistress, and began to unfasten the ribbons and flowers of her headdress, —a species of edifice which the most skilful could not demolish in less than a quarter of an hour. While she was thus employed, Andrée did not utter a word; and

Nicole, left to follow her own wishes, did her work rapidly, without disturbing Andrée, whose preoccupation was so great that she permitted Nicole to pull out her hair with impunity.

When the night-toilet was finished, Andrée gave her orders for the morrow. In the morning some books were to be brought from Versailles which Philippe had left there for his sister, and the tuner was to be ordered to attend to put the harpsichord in proper order.

Nicole replied that if she were not called during the night, she would rise early, and would have both these commissions executed before her young lady was awake.

"To-morrow also I will write to Philippe," said Andrée, speaking to herself; "that will console me a little."

"Come what will," thought Nicole, "I shall not carry the letter."

And at this reflection the girl, who was not quite lost yet, began to think, in saddened mood, that she was about for the first time to leave that excellent mistress under whose care her mind and heart had been awakened. The thought of Andrée was linked in her mind with so many other recollections that to touch it was to stir the whole chain which carried her back to the first days of infancy.

While these two young creatures, so different in their character and their condition, were thus reflecting beside each other, without any connection existing between their thoughts, time was rapidly flying, and Andrée's little timepiece, which was always in advance of the great clock of Trianon, struck nine. Beausire would be at the appointed place, and Nicole had but half an hour to join her lover. She finished her task as quickly as possible, not without uttering some sighs, which Andrée did not even notice. She folded a night-shawl around her mistress, and as Andrée still sat immovable, with her eyes fixed on the

ceiling, she drew Richelieu's phial from her bosom, put two pieces of sugar into a goblet, added the water necessary to melt it, and without hesitation, and by the resolute force of her will, so strong in one so young, she poured two drops of the fluid from the phial into the water, which immediately became turbid, then changed to a slight opal tint, which soon died away.

"Mademoiselle," said Nicole, "your glass of water is prepared, your clothes are folded, the night-lamp is lighted. You know I must rise very early to-morrow morning: may I go to bed now?"

"Yes," replied Andrée, absently.

Nicole made her reverence, heaved a last sigh, which, like the others, was unnoticed, and closed behind her the glass-door leading to the ante-room. But instead of retiring into her little cell adjoining the corridor and lighted from Andrée's ante-room, she softly took to flight, leaving the door of the corridor ajar, so that Richelieu's instructions were scrupulously followed. Then, not to arouse the attention of the neighbors, she descended the stairs on tiptoe, bounded down the outer steps, and ran quickly to join Monsieur de Beausire at the gate.

Gilbert had not left his post of observation. He had heard Nicole say that she would return in two hours, and he waited. But as it was now ten minutes past the appointed time, he began to fear that she would not return. Suddenly he saw her running, as if some one were pursuing her.

Nicole approached the gate, passed the key through the bars to Beausire, who opened it; she rushed out, and the gate closed with a dull, grating noise. The key was then thrown into the grass in the ditch, near the spot where Gilbert was stationed. He heard it fall with a dead sound, and marked the place where it had dropped.

Nicole and Beausire in the mean time gained ground. Gilbert heard them move away; and soon he could distinguish, not the noise of a carriage, as Nicole had required, but the pawing of a horse, which, after some moments' delay, — occupied doubtless by Nicole in recrimination, who had wished to depart, like a duchess, in her carriage, — changed to the clattering of his iron-shod feet on the pavement, and at last died away in the distance.

Gilbert breathed freely; he was free, free from Nicole, — that is to say, from his enemy. Andrée was alone. Perhaps in taking flight Nicole had left the key in the door; perhaps he could penetrate to Andrée's chamber. This idea excited the impetuous young man to a frenzy of fear and doubt, of curiosity and desire. He took the direction contrary to that which Nicole was pursuing, and hurried toward the offices of Trianon.

CHAPTER XX.

DOUBLE SIGHT.

When Andrée was alone, she gradually recovered from the mental torpor into which she had fallen; and while Nicole was flying *en croupe* behind Monsieur de Beausire, she knelt down and offered up a fervent prayer for Philippe, the only being in the world she loved with a true and deep attachment; and while she prayed, her trust in God assumed new strength, and inspired her with fresh courage.

The prayers which Andrée offered were not composed of a succession of words strung one to the other, they were uttered in a kind of heavenly ecstasy, during which her soul rose to her God and mingled with his spirit.

In these impassioned supplications of the mind freed from earthly concerns, there was no alloy of self. Andrée in some degree abandoned herself, like a shipwrecked mariner who has lost hope, and who prays no longer for himself, but only for his wife and children, soon to become orphans. This inward grief had sprung up in Andrée's bosom since her brother's departure; but it was not entirely without another cause. Like her prayer, it was composed of two distinct elements, one of which was quite inexplicable to her. It was, as it were, a presentiment, — the perceptible approach of some impending misfortune. It was a sensation resembling that of darting pains in a cicatrized wound. The continuous pain is over, but the remembrance of it survives, and reminds the

sufferer of the calamity, as the wound itself had previously done.

Andrée did not even attempt to explain her feelings to herself. Devoted heart and soul to Philippe, she centred in her beloved brother her every thought and every affection. Then she rose, took a book from her modestly furnished library, placed the light within reach of her hand, and lay down on the bed. The book she had chosen, or rather upon which she had accidentally placed her hand, was a dictionary of botany. It may readily be imagined that this book was not calculated to absorb her attention; on the contrary, it made her sleepy. Gradually drowsiness weighed down her eyelids, and a filmy veil obscured her vision. For a moment the young girl struggled against sleep; twice or thrice she collected her scattered thoughts, which soon escaped again from her control; then, raising her head to blow out the candle, she perceived the glass of water prepared by Nicole, stretched out her hand and took the glass, stirred the sugar with the spoon, and, already half-asleep, she raised the glass to her lips.

Suddenly, just as her lips were already touching the beverage, a strange emotion made her hand tremble, a moist and burning weight fell on her brow, and Andrée recognized with terror, by the current of the fluid which rushed through her nerves, that supernatural attack of mysterious sensations which had several times already triumphed over her strength and overpowered her mind. She had only time to place the glass upon the plate, when instantly, without a murmur, but with a sigh which escaped from her half-open lips, she lost the use of voice, sight, and reason, and seized with a death-like torpor, fell back, as if struck by lightning, upon her bed. But this quasi-annihilation was but the momentary transition to

another state of existence. For a moment she seemed lifeless, and her eyes were apparently closed in the slumber of death; but suddenly she rose, opened her eyes, which stared with a fearful fixity of gaze, and stepped down from her bed to the floor, like a marble statue descending from a tomb.

There was no longer room for doubt. Andrée was sunk in that marvellous sleep which had several times already suspended her vital functions. She crossed the chamber, opened the glass-door, and entered the corridor with the fixed and rigid attitude of breathing marble. She reached the stairs, descended step by step without hesitation and without haste, and emerged upon the portico. Just as Andrée placed her foot upon the topmost step to descend, Gilbert reached the lowest on his way up. Seeing this white and solemn figure advancing as if to meet him, he recoiled before her, and, still retreating as she advanced, he concealed himself in a clump of shrubs. It was thus, he recollected, that he had already seen Andrée de Taverney at the Château of Taverney.

Andrée passed close by him, even touched him, but did not see him. The young man, thunderstruck, speechless with surprise, sank to the ground on one knee. His limbs refused to support him, — he was afraid. Not knowing to what cause to attribute this strange excursion, he followed her with his eyes; but his reason was confounded, his blood beat impetuously against his temples, and he was in a state nearer to madness than to the coolness and circumspection necessary for an observer.

Gilbert remained, therefore, crouching on the grass among the leaves, watching, as he had never ceased to do since this fatal attachment had entered his heart. Immediately the mystery was explained: Andrée was neither mad nor bewildered, as he had for a moment supposed;

Andrée, with this slow, sepulchral step, was going to a rendezvous. A gleam of lightning now furrowed the sky, and by its blue and livid light Gilbert saw a man concealed beneath the sombre avenue of linden-trees; and notwithstanding the rapidity of the flash, he had recognized the pale face and disordered garments of the man relieved against the dark background. Andrée advanced toward this man, whose arm was extended as if to draw her to him.

A sensation like the branding of a red-hot iron rushed through Gilbert's heart; he raised himself upon his knees to see more clearly. At that moment another flash of lightning illumined the sky. He recognized Balsamo, covered with dust and perspiration,—Balsamo, who by some mysterious means had succeeded in entering Trianon, and thus drew Andrée toward him as invincibly, as fatally, as the serpent fascinates its prey.

When two paces from him Andrée stopped. Balsamo took her hand; her whole frame shuddered.

"Do you see?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Andrée; "but in summoning me so suddenly, you have nearly killed me."

"Pardon, pardon!" replied Balsamo; "but my brain reels, I am beside myself, I am nearly mad, I am dying."

"You are indeed suffering," said Andrée, conscious of Balsamo's feelings by the contact of his hand.

"Yes, yes," replied Balsamo; "I suffer, and I come to you for consolation. You alone can save me."

"Question me."

"Once more, do you see?"

"Oh! perfectly."

"Will you follow me to my house? Can you do so?"

"I can, if you will conduct me there in thought."

"Come!"

"Ah!" said Andrée, "we are entering Paris; we follow the boulevard, we plunge into a street lighted by a single lamp."

"Yes, that is it. Enter, enter!"

"We are in an antechamber. There is a staircase to the right, but you draw me toward the wall. The wall opens; steps appear —"

"Ascend!" exclaimed Balsamo; "that is our way."

"Ah! we are in a sleeping-chamber; there are lions' skins, arms — Stay, the back of the fireplace opens."

"Pass through: where are you?"

"In a strange sort of room, without any outlet, and the windows of which are barred. Oh! how disordered everything in the room appears."

"But empty, — it is empty is it not?"

"Yes, empty."

"Can you see the person who inhabited it?"

"Yes, if you give me something which has touched her, which comes from her, or which belongs to her."

"Hold! there is some of her hair."

Andrée took the hair and placed it on her heart. "Oh! I recognize her," said she; "I have already seen this woman. She was flying toward Paris."

"Yes, yes; can you tell me what she has been doing during the last two hours, and how she escaped?"

"Wait a moment; yes, — she is reclining upon a sofa; her breast is half bared, and she has a wound on one side."

"Look, Andrée, look! do not lose sight of her."

"She was asleep; she awakes, she looks around; she takes a handkerchief and climbs upon a chair. She ties the handkerchief to the bars of the window — oh! my God!"

"She is really determined to die, then?"

"Oh, yes! she is resolute. But this sort of death terrifies her. She leaves the handkerchief tied to the bars; she descends — ah! poor woman!"

"What?"

"Oh! how she weeps, how she suffers, and wrings her hands! She searches for a corner of the wall against which to dash her head!"

"Oh, my God! my God!" murmured Balsamo.

"She rushes toward the chimney-piece! It represents two marble lions: she will dash out her brains against the lions!"

"What then? Look, Andrée, look; I will it!"

"She stops."

Balsamo breathed again.

"She looks—"

"What does she look at?" asked Balsamo.

"She has perceived some blood upon the lion's eye."

"Oh, heavens!"

"Yes, blood, and yet she did not strike herself against it. Oh, strange! the blood is not hers, it is yours."

"Mine?" asked Balsamo, frantic with excitement.

"Yes, yours. You had cut your finger with a knife, with a poniard — and had touched the lion's eye with your bleeding hand. I see you."

"True, true. But how does she escape?"

"Stay, I see her examining the blood; she reflects; then she places her finger where you had placed yours. Ah! the lion's eye gives way; a spring acts; the chimney slab swings open!"

"Oh! imprudent, wretched fool that I am, — I have betrayed myself!"

Andrée was silent.

"And she leaves the room?" asked Balsamo; "she escapes?"

"Oh! you must forgive the poor woman; she was very miserable."

"Where is she? Whither does she fly? Follow her, Andrée; I will it."

"She stops for a moment in the chamber of furs and armor; a closet is open; a casket, usually locked in this closet, is upon the table; she recognizes the box; she takes it."

"What does the box contain?"

"Your papers, I think."

"Describe it."

"It is covered with blue velvet, and studded with brass nails, — has clasps of silver, and a silver lock."

"Oh!" exclaimed Balsamo, stamping with anger, "it is she, then, who has taken the casket?"

"Yes. She descends the stairs leading into the anteroom, opens the door, draws back the chain of the street-door, and goes out."

"Is it late?"

"It must be late, for it is dark."

"So much the better; she must have fled shortly before my return, and I shall perhaps have time to overtake her. Follow her, Andrée; follow her!"

"Once outside the house, she runs as if she were mad; she reaches the boulevard; she hastens on without pausing."

"In which direction?"

"Toward the Bastille."

"You see her yet?"

"Yes; she looks like a madwoman; she jostles against the passers-by. At length she stops; she endeavors to discover where she is; she inquires."

"What does she say? Listen, Andrée, listen; in Heaven's name do not lose a syllable! You say she inquires?"

"Yes, she addresses a man dressed in black."

"What does she ask?"

"She wishes to know the address of the lieutenant of police."

"Oh! then it was not a vain threat. Does the person give it her?"

"Yes."

"What does she do?"

"She retraces her steps and turns down a winding street. She crosses a large square."

"The Place Royale, — it is the direct way. Can you read her intention?"

"Follow her quickly; hasten! She goes to betray you! If she arrives before you, and sees Monsieur de Sartines, you are lost!"

Balsamo uttered a terrible cry, plunged into the thicket, rushed through a little door which a shadowy apparition opened and closed after him, and leaped with one bound on his faithful Djerid, who was pawing the ground at the little gate. The animal, urged on at once by voice and spur, darted like an arrow toward Paris; and soon nothing was heard but the clattering of his hoofs on the paved causeway.

As for Andrée, she remained standing there, cold, mute, and pale. Then, as if Balsamo had borne away with him life and strength, she tottered, drooped, and fell. Balsamo, in his eagerness to follow Lorenza, had forgotten to awaken her.

CHAPTER XXI.

CATALEPSY.

As we have said, Andrée did not sink all at once, but gradually, in the manner we will attempt to describe.

Alone, abandoned, overpowered with that interior coldness which succeeds any violent nervous shock, Andrée began to tremble and totter like one seized by an epileptic fit. Gilbert still remained in the same place, — rigid, immovable, leaning forward, and devouring her with his gaze. But as it may readily be imagined, Gilbert, entirely ignorant of magnetic phenomena, thought neither of sleep nor of subjected will. He had heard nothing, or almost nothing, of her dialogue with Balsamo. But for the second time, at Trianon as at Taverney, Andrée had appeared to obey the summons of this man, who had acquired such a strange and terrible power over her. To Gilbert, therefore, the situation was summed up in these words: "Mademoiselle Andrée has, if not a lover, at least a man whom she loves, and to whom she grants a rendezvous at night."

The dialogue which had taken place between Andrée and Balsamo, although sustained in a low voice, had all the appearance of a quarrel. Balsamo, excited, flying, frantic, seemed like a lover in despair; Andrée, left alone, mute and motionless, like a loving girl abandoned. It was at this moment that he saw the young girl totter, wring her hands, and turn around bewildered. Then she uttered dull groans that seemed to rend her burdened heart. She

endeavored, or rather Nature endeavored, to throw back the overpowering mass of fluid which, during the magnetic sleep, had endowed her with that double sight whose phenomena we saw manifested in the last chapter.

But Nature was overpowered; Andrée could not succeed in throwing off the bonds of that mysterious will which Balsamo had forgotten to withdraw. She could not loose the marvellous, inexplicable ties which had bound her hand and foot; and by dint of struggling, she fell into those convulsions which in the olden time the Pythoness suffered upon her tripod before the crowd of religious questioners who swarmed around the peristyle of the temple.

Andrée lost her balance, and with a moan of pain sank toward the ground as if she had been struck by the flash which at that moment furrowed the vault of heaven. But she had not yet touched the earth when Gilbert, strong and agile as a tiger, darted toward her, seized her in his arms, and without being conscious that he carried a burden, bore her back into the chamber which she had left to obey Balsamo's summons, and in which the candle was yet burning beside the disarranged couch.

Gilbert found all the doors open as Andrée had left them. As he entered, he stumbled against the sofa, and placed on it the cold and inanimate form of the young girl. His contact with that lifeless frame had stirred a fever within him; his nerves quivered, his blood boiled. His first thought, however, was chaste and pure. It was necessary, first of all, to recall this beautiful statue to life. He looked round for the carafe, in order to sprinkle some drops of water in Andrée's face. But just as his trembling hand was stretched forth to grasp the thin neck of the crystal ewer, it seemed to him that a firm but light step sounded on the stairs leading to Andrée's chamber. It

could not be Nicole, for Nicole had fled with Monsieur de Beausire; it could not be Balsamo, for Balsamo was spurring with lightning haste to Paris. It must therefore be a stranger. Gilbert, if discovered, was lost; Andrée was to him like one of those princesses of Spain whom a subject may not touch, even to save from death.

All these ideas rushed like a whirlwind through Gilbert's mind in less time than that fatal step required to mount another stair. He could not calculate the exact distance of the footstep, which every moment approached still nearer, for the storm which raged without dulled every other sound; but gifted with extraordinary coolness and foresight, the young man understood that that was no place for him, and that the most important matter was to conceal himself from sight. He hastily blew out the candle which illumined Andrée's apartment, and entered the cabinet which served as Nicole's sleeping-chamber. From this hiding-place he could see through the glass-door into Andrée's apartment, and also into the antechamber.

In this antechamber a night-lamp was burning upon a little table. Gilbert had at first thought of extinguishing it, as he had extinguished the candle; but he had not time. The step creaked in the corridor, a repressed breathing was heard, the figure of a man appeared upon the threshold, glided timidly into the antechamber, closed the door, and bolted it.

Gilbert had only time to hasten into Nicole's cabinet and to close the glass-door after him. He held his breath, pressed his face against the stained-glass panes, and listened eagerly.

The storm still howled wildly outside, large rain-drops beat against the windows of Andrée's apartment and those of the corridor, where a casement, accidentally left open,

creaked upon its hinges, and every now and then, dashed back by the wind which rushed into the corridor, struck noisily against its frame.

But the war of the elements, terrible as it was, produced no effect on Gilbert. His whole soul was concentrated in his gaze, which was riveted upon this man, who crossed the antechamber, passed not two paces distant from Gilbert, and unhesitatingly entered the chamber.

Gilbert saw the man advance, feeling his way, to Andrée's bed, make a gesture of surprise on seeing the bed unoccupied, and almost immediately jostle with his arm the candle upon the table. The candle fell, and Gilbert heard the crystal socket break in falling on the marble table. Then the man called twice in a subdued voice, "Nicole! Nicole!"

"What, Nicole!" thought Gilbert, in his hiding-place. "Why does this man call Nicole instead of Andrée?"

But as no voice replied to his, the man lifted the candle from the floor, and proceeded on tiptoe to light it at the night-lamp in the antechamber. It was then that Gilbert fixed his whole attention upon this strange nocturnal visitor; he gazed as if his vision could have pierced the wall. Suddenly he trembled, and even in his hiding-place recoiled a step.

By the light of the two flames combined, Gilbert, trembling and half-dead with affright, recognized in this man who held the candle in his hand — the king!

Then all was explained, — Nicole's flight, the money she had given Beausire, the door left open, the interviews between Richelieu and Taverney, and all that dark and mysterious intrigue of which the young girl was the centre.

Then Gilbert understood why the king had called Nicole, the instrument of that crime, the complaisant

Judas who had sold and delivered up her mistress! But at the thought of the king's purpose in coming to that chamber, at the thought of what was about to take place before him, the blood rushed to his eyes and blinded him. He had the impulse to cry out; but fear, that unreflecting, capricious, irresistible sentiment, — the fear he had of that man, still full of prestige, who was called the king of France, tied his tongue.

Louis XV. meanwhile had returned to the chamber, candle in hand. Immediately he saw Andrée, in a robe of white muslin which left her person partially uncovered, her head leaning against the back of the sofa, one leg resting on the cushion, and the other, inflexible and bare, resting on the carpet. At that sight the king smiled. The candle lighted up that sinister smile; but almost at the same time a smile equally sinister appeared on Andrée's face. Louis XV. murmured a few words, which Gilbert understood to be words of love, and placing his light on the table, glancing as he turned at the illumined sky, he went and knelt down before the young girl and kissed her hand.

Gilbert wiped away the perspiration coursing down his face. Andrée did not stir.

The king, perceiving that Andrée's hand was cold, took it in his own to warm it, and passing his other arm around that body so beautiful and so sweet, he leaned forward to murmur in her ear some of that fond nonsense which is breathed sometimes in the ears of young girls asleep. At that moment his face approached Andrée's so closely as to touch it lightly.

Gilbert felt in his pocket, and breathed more freely as he grasped the handle of a long knife which he was wont to use in trimming the trees of the park.

The king found Andrée's face as cold as her hand. He

rose to his feet. His eyes fell on Andrée's naked foot, white and small as that of Cinderella. He took it between his hands; it was as cold as that of a marble statue. The king was startled.

Gilbert, gazing upon the charms of that beauteous, unveiled form, and feeling as if the threatened crime was about to be committed against himself, ground his teeth and opened the knife, which until then he had held closed in his hand.

But the king had already abandoned Andrée's foot, as he had abandoned her hand and her face, and, surprised by the young girl's sleep, which at first he had ascribed to a coquettish prudery, he sought to account for the deathly coldness which had seized upon the extremities of that lovely body; he asked himself if the heart could still beat when hand, foot, and face were so cold. He parted, therefore, Andrée's robe, exposing her virginal breast, and with a touch at once timid and cynical he questioned the heart, silent beneath that flesh, cold as alabaster, and as white and firm in its rounded form.

Gilbert glided half through the doorway, with his knife in his hand, his eyes flashing, his teeth pressed together, determined, should the king continue his enterprises, to stab him and then to stab himself.

Just then a fearful peal of thunder made every article of furniture in the room shake, even to the couch before which Louis was kneeling. A livid and sulphureous flash of lightning threw so dazzling a light over Andrée's countenance that Louis, alarmed at her paleness, her motionless attitude, and her silence, started back, murmuring: "This girl is surely dead!"

At the same instant the idea of having kissed a corpse sent an icy chill through the king's veins. He seized the candle, held it close to Andrée's face, and hastily examined her features by the light of the trembling flame.

Beholding her livid lips, her swollen and discolored eyes, her dishevelled hair, her chest which no breath stirred, he uttered a cry, let the light fall, staggered back, and reeled like a drunken man into the ante-room, against the walls of which he stumbled in his alarm. His hasty step sounded upon the stairs, then on the gravel walks of the garden, and was soon lost in the howling storm which raged through the long alleys and shady groves of Trianon.

Then Gilbert, silent and gloomy, still holding his knife, went out from his hiding-place. He advanced to the threshold of Andrée's chamber, and for several seconds looked at the young girl buried in her deep sleep. Meanwhile the candle dropped by the king was still burning, overturned upon the carpet, and threw its light on the delicate foot and the marble limbs of that adorable body.

Gilbert slowly closed his knife, while his face gradually assumed the expression of an inexorable resolution; then he went to listen at the door by which the king had departed. He listened more than a full minute. Then he, as the king had done, closed the door and pushed home the bolt. Then he blew out the light in the antechamber. Finally, with the same deliberation, with the same sombre fire in his eyes, he returned to Andrée's chamber and put his foot on the candle, still wasting on the carpet. A sudden darkness obscured the fatal smile which hovered on his lips. "Andrée, Andrée!" he murmured, "I promised you that the third time you should fall into my power you would not escape me as you had before. Andrée, Andrée! to the terrible romance which you accused me of inventing, there must be a terrible end!" And with arms extended, he went straight to the sofa where Andrée was lying, still cold, motionless, and unconscious.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WILL.

We have seen Balsamo depart. Djerid bore him on with the speed of lightning, while the rider, pale with terror and impatience, bent forward over the flowing mane, breathing with half-opened lips the air which the crest of the noble steed cleft as the rapid prow of the vessel cuts the waves. Behind him houses and trees disappeared like fantastic visions. He scarcely perceived, as he passed, the clumsy wagon groaning on its axle-tree, while its five huge horses started with affright at the approach of this living meteor, which they could not imagine to belong to the same race as themselves.

Balsamo proceeded at this rate for a league, with whirling brain, sparkling eyes, and panting breath. Horse and rider had traversed Versailles in a few seconds. The startled inhabitants who happened to be in the streets had seen a train of sparks flash past them, — nothing more. A second league was passed in like manner. Djerid had accomplished the distance in little more than a quarter of an hour, and yet this quarter of an hour had seemed to his rider a century. Suddenly a thought darted through his brain. He pulled up suddenly, throwing the noble courser back upon his haunches, while his fore-feet ploughed the ground.

Horse and rider breathed for a moment. Drawing a long breath, Balsamo raised his head. Then wiping the perspiration from his forehead, while his nostrils dilated in

the breeze of night, he murmured: "Oh! madman that you are, neither the rapidity of your steed nor the ardor of your desire will ever equal the instantaneous effect of thunder or the rapidity of the electric flash; and yet it is that which you require to avert the danger impending over you! You require the rapid effect, the instantaneous, the all-powerful shock, which will paralyze the feet whose activity you fear, the tongue whose speech destroys you. You require, at this distance, the victorious sleep which restores to you the possession of the slave who has broken her chain. Oh! if she should ever again be in my power!" and Balsamo, grinding his teeth, made a gesture of despair.

"Oh! you do well to wish, Balsamo; you do well to fly!" he exclaimed. "Lorenza has already arrived, she is about to speak, — she has perhaps already spoken. Oh! wretched woman, no punishment can be terrible enough for you.

"Let me try," continued Balsamo, frowning, his eyes fixed, and his chin resting on his hand; "let me try. Either science is a dream or a fact; it is either impotent or powerful, — let me try. Lorenza, Lorenza! it is my will that you sleep, wheresoever you may be. Lorenza, sleep, — sleep! it is my will! I reckon upon your obedience!

"Oh, no, no!" he murmured, despairingly; "no, I utter a falsehood; I do not believe, — I dare not reckon upon it; and yet the will is all. Oh! I will it with my whole soul, with all the strength of my being. Cleave the air, my potent will; traverse all the currents of opposing or indifferent wills; pass through walls in thy course like a bullet from a gun; follow her wherever she is. Go, strike, destroy! Lorenza, Lorenza! it is my will that you sleep; be dumb at my command!"

And for some moments he concentrated his thoughts upon this aim, imprinting it on his brain as if to lend it more speed in its flight toward Paris. Then after this mysterious operation — in which doubtless all the divine atoms animated by God, the master and lord of all things, assisted — Balsamo, once more setting his teeth hard and clenching his hands, gave the reins to Djerid, but this time without using either the knee or the spurs. It seemed as if Balsamo wished to convince himself.

The noble steed paced gently onward in obedience to the tacit permission of his master, placing his hoof gently upon the pavement with the light and noiseless step peculiar to his race. During all this time, which to a superficial observer would have seemed entirely lost, Balsamo was arranging a complete plan of defence. He concluded it just as Djerid entered the streets of Sèvres. Arrived opposite the park-gates, he stopped and looked round, as if expecting some one. Almost immediately a man emerged from beneath a carriage entrance, and advanced toward him.

"Is that you, Fritz?" asked Balsamo.

"Yes, Master."

"Have you made inquiries?"

"Yes."

"Is Madame Dubarry in Paris, or at Luciennes?"

"She is in Paris."

Balsamo raised his eyes to heaven with a triumphant look.

"How did you come?"

"On Sultan."

"Where is he?"

"In the court-yard of this inn."

"Saddled?"

"Yes."

"Very well; get ready to follow me."

Fritz hastened to bring out Sultan, — one of those strong German horses, of good disposition, who grumble a little at forced marches, but who, nevertheless, go as long as they have breath in their lungs, or while there is a spur at their master's heel. Fritz returned to Balsamo, who was writing by the light of a street-lantern.

"Return to Paris," said he, "and manage by some means to give this note to Madame Dubarry in person. You have half an hour for this purpose. After which you will return to the Rue Saint Claude, where you will wait for Madame Lorenza, who cannot fail to return soon. You will let her pass without any observation and without offering any opposition. Go, and remember, above all, that in half an hour your commission must be executed."

"It is well," said Fritz; "it shall be done." As he gave this confident reply to Balsamo, he attacked Sultan with whip and spur, and the good steed started off, astonished at this unusual aggression, and neighing piteously.

Balsamo by degrees resumed his composure, and took the road to Paris, which he entered three quarters of an hour afterward, appearing quite fresh, and wearing a calm, or rather a thoughtful, expression.

Balsamo's reasoning had been correct. However swift Djerid, that whinnying son of the desert, might be, his speed was in this case useless; thought alone could hope to overtake Lorenza in her flight from prison. From the Rue Saint Claude she had gained the boulevard; and turning to the right, she soon saw the walls of the Bastille rise before her. But Lorenza, constantly a prisoner, was entirely ignorant of Paris. Moreover, her first aim was to escape from that accursed house in which she saw only a dungeon; vengeance was a secondary consideration. She had just entered the Faubourg Saint Antoine, hastening

onward with bewildered steps, when she was accosted by a young man who had been following her for some moments with astonishment.

In fact, Lorenza, an Italian girl from the neighborhood of Rome, having almost always lived a secluded life, far from all knowledge of the fashions and customs of the age, was dressed more like an Oriental than a European lady; that is, in flowing and sumptuous robes, — very unlike the charming dolls of that time, confined, like wasps, in long, tight waists, rustling with silk and muslin, under which it was almost useless to seek a body, their utmost ambition being to appear immaterial.

Lorenza had only adopted from the French costume of that period the shoes with heels two inches high, — that strange-looking invention which stiffened the foot, displayed the beauty of the ankle, and which rendered it impossible for the Arethusas of that rather mythological age to fly from the pursuit of their Alpheuses.

The Alpheus who pursued our Arethusa easily overtook her, therefore. He had seen her lovely ankles peeping from beneath her petticoats of satin and lace, her unpowdered hair, and her dark eyes sparkling with a strange fire from under a mantilla thrown over her head and neck, and he imagined he saw in Lorenza a lady disguised for a masquerade or for a rendezvous, and proceeding on foot, for want of a coach, to some little house of the faubourg. He approached her, therefore, and walking beside her, hat in hand, "Good heavens! Madame," said he, "you cannot go far in this costume and with these shoes, which retard your progress. Will you accept my arm until we find a coach, and allow me the honor of accompanying you to your destination?"

Lorenza turned her head abruptly, gazed with her dark, expressive eyes at the man who thus made her an offer

which to many ladies would have appeared an impertinent one, and stopping, "Yes," said she, "most willingly."

The young man gallantly offered his arm. "Whither are we going, Madame?" he asked.

"To the hôtel of the lieutenant of police."

The young man started. "To Monsieur de Sartines?" he inquired.

"I do not know whether his name is Monsieur de Sartines or not; I wish to speak to whoever is lieutenant of police."

The young man began to reflect. A young and handsome woman wandering alone in the streets of Paris at eight o'clock in the evening, in a strange costume, holding a box under her arm, and inquiring for the hôtel of the lieutenant of police, while she was going in the contrary direction, seemed to him suspicious.

"Ah, *diable!*" said he; "the hôtel of the lieutenant of police is not in this direction at all."

"Where is it, then?"

"In the Faubourg Saint Germain."

"And how must I go to the Faubourg Saint Germain?"

"This way, Madame," replied the young man, calm, but always polite; "and if you wish, we can take the first coach we meet —"

"Oh, yes! a coach; you are right."

The young man conducted Lorenza back to the boulevard, and having met a fiacre, he hailed it. The coachman answered his summons.

"Where to, Madame?" he asked.

"To the hôtel of Monsieur de Sartines," said the young man; and with a last effort of politeness, or rather of astonishment, having opened the coach-door, he bowed to Lorenza; and after assisting her to get in, stood looking after her as one stands gazing in a dream. The coachman,

full of respect for the dreadful name, gave his horse the whip, and drove rapidly in the direction indicated.

It was while Lorenza was thus crossing the Place Royale that Andrée in her magnetic sleep had seen and heard her, and denounced her to Balsamo. In twenty minutes Lorenza was at the door of the hôtel.

"Must I wait for you, my fair lady?" asked the coachman.

"Yes," replied Lorenza, mechanically; and stepping lightly from the coach, she disappeared beneath the portal of the splendid hôtel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HOTEL OF MONSIEUR DE SARTINES.

The moment Lorenza entered the courtyard, she found herself surrounded by a crowd of soldiers and officers. She addressed the guardsman who stood nearest to her, and begged him to conduct her to the lieutenant of police. The guardsman handed her over to the porter, who, seeing a beautiful stranger, richly dressed, and holding a magnificent coffer under her arm, thought that the visit might prove to be an important one, and preceded her up the grand staircase to an antechamber, where, after the sagacious scrutiny of the porter, every visitor could be admitted to present an explanation, an accusation, or a request, to Monsieur de Sartines, at any hour of the day or night. It is needless to say that the first two classes of visitors were more favorably received than the last.

Lorenza, when questioned by the usher, replied only, "Are you Monsieur de Sartines?"

The usher was profoundly astonished that any one could mistake his black dress and steel chain for the embroidered coat and flowing wig of the lieutenant of police; but as no lieutenant is ever angry at being called captain, as he marked the foreign accent of the lady, and as her firm and steady gaze was not that of a lunatic, he felt convinced that the fair visitor had something important in the coffer which she held so carefully and so securely under her arm.

Nevertheless, since Monsieur de Sartines was a prudent and suspicious man, since traps had been laid for him with baits not less enticing than that of the beautiful Italian, there was good watch kept around him, and Lorenza had to undergo the investigation, the questioning, and the suspicions of half a dozen secretaries and valets. The upshot of all these questions and replies was that Monsieur de Sartines had not yet returned, and that Lorenza must wait. Then the young woman sank into a moody silence, and her eyes wandered over the bare walls of the vast antechamber.

At last the ringing of a bell was heard; a carriage rolled into the courtyard, and a second usher entered, and announced to Lorenza that Monsieur de Sartines was waiting for her.

Lorenza rose, and crossed two halls full of people with suspicious-looking faces, and dresses still more strange than her own. At last she was introduced into a large cabinet of an octagon form, lighted by a number of wax candles.

A man of from fifty to fifty-five years of age, enveloped in a dressing-gown, his head surmounted by a wig profusely powdered and curled, was seated at work before a lofty piece of furniture, the upper part of which, somewhat resembling in form a cupboard, was closed with two doors of looking-glass, in which the person seated could, without moving, see those who entered the room, and could examine their features before they had time to compose them in harmony with his own.

The lower part of this article of furniture formed a secretary. A number of rosewood drawers composed the front, each of which closed by the combination of some letters of the alphabet. Monsieur de Sartines kept in them his papers, and the ciphers which no one could read

while he lived, since the drawers opened for him alone, and which none could decipher after his death, unless in some drawer, still more secret than the others, he should find the key to the cipher.

This secretary, or rather this cupboard, contained behind the glasses of the upper part, twelve drawers, also closed by an invisible mechanism. This piece of furniture, constructed expressly by the regent to contain his chemical or political secrets, had been given by that prince to Dubois, and left by Dubois to Monsieur Dombreval, lieutenant of police. It was from the latter that Monsieur de Sartines had inherited the secretary and the secret. However, Monsieur de Sartines had not consented to use it until after the death of the donor, and even then he had had all the arrangements of the locks altered.

This piece of furniture had some reputation in the world, and shut too closely, people said, for Monsieur de Sartines to keep only his wigs in it. The grumblers, and their name was legion at this period, said that if it were possible to read through the panels of this secretary, there would most certainly have been discovered, in one of its drawers, the famous treaty by virtue of which Louis XV. speculated in grain, through the intervention of his devoted agent, Monsieur de Sartines.

The lieutenant of police therefore saw, reflected in the glass, the pale, serious face of Lorenza as she advanced toward him with the coffer still beneath her arm. In the centre of the apartment the young woman stopped. Her costume, her figure, and the strangeness of her proceedings, struck the lieutenant. "Who are you?" he asked, without turning round, but looking at her in the glass. "What do you want with me?"

"Am I in the presence of Monsieur de Sartines, lieutenant of police?" replied Lorenza.

"Yes," replied he, abruptly.

"Who will assure me of that?"

Monsieur de Sartines turned round.

"Will it be a proof that I am the man you seek," said he, "if I send you to prison?"

Lorenza made no reply. Only, she looked around her with the indescribable dignity peculiar to the women of Italy, seeking the chair which Monsieur de Sartines did not offer her. He was vanquished by this look, for Monsieur le Comte d'Alby de Sartines was a remarkably well-bred man. "Be seated," said he, sharply.

Lorenza drew a chair forward and sat down.

"Speak quickly," said the magistrate. "Come! let me know what you want."

"Monsieur," said Lorenza, "I come to place myself under your protection."

Monsieur de Sartines looked at her with the sarcastic look peculiar to him.

"Ah, ah!" said he.

"Monsieur," continued Lorenza, "I have been carried off from my family, and have, by a false marriage, fallen into the power of a man who for the last three years has oppressed me and made my life miserable."

Monsieur de Sartines looked with admiration upon this noble countenance, and felt touched and charmed by this voice, so soft that its utterance seemed like a strain of music.

"From what country do you come?" he asked.

"I am a Roman."

"What is your name?"

"Lorenza."

"Lorenza what?"

"Lorenza Feliciani."

"I do not know that family. Are you a demoiselle?"

"Demoiselle" at this period meant a lady of quality. In our days a lady thinks herself noble enough when she is married, and wishes thenceforth to be called only "madame."

"I am a demoiselle," replied Lorenza.

"Well, what do you demand?"

"I demand justice against this man who has stolen and incarcerated me."

"That is no affair of mine," said the lieutenant of police; "are you his wife?"

"He says so, at least."

"What! he says so?"

"Yes; but I do not remember anything of it, as the marriage was contracted while I slept."

"*Peste!* you sleep soundly."

"What do you say?"

"I say that it is not in my province. Apply to an attorney and bring an action; I do not like to meddle in family matters." Monsieur de Sartines waved his hand with a gesture which meant, "Begone!" Lorenza did not move.

"Well?" asked Monsieur de Sartines, astonished.

"I have not done yet," said she; "and if I come to you, you must understand that it is not to complain of a trifling matter, but to revenge myself. I have told you my country; the women of my country revenge themselves, but never complain."

"That is another affair," said Monsieur de Sartines; "but speak quickly, fair lady, for my time is precious."

"I told you that I came to you to ask for your protection. Shall I have it?"

"Protection against whom?"

"Against the man upon whom I wish to revenge myself."

"He is powerful, then?"

"More powerful than a king."

"Come, explain, my dear Madame! Why should I protect you against a man who is, in your opinion, more powerful than a king, by reason of an act which is perhaps a crime? If you wish to be revenged on this man, revenge yourself. That is nothing to me; only, if you commit a crime, I shall have to arrest you. After which, we shall see: that is the routine."

"No, Monsieur," said Lorenza; "no, you will not have me arrested, for my vengeance is of the greatest utility to you, to the king, and to France. I shall revenge myself by revealing this man's secrets."

"Ah, ah! he has secrets?" said Monsieur de Sartines, beginning to feel interested in spite of himself.

"Important secrets, Monsieur."

"Of what kind?"

"Political."

"Mention them."

"But, in short, will you protect me?"

"What sort of protection do you require?" said the magistrate, with a cold smile, — "gold, or affection?"

"I only ask permission, Monsieur, to retire to a convent, and to live there concealed and unknown. I ask that this convent may become my tomb, but that this tomb may never be violated by any one in the world."

"Ah!" said the magistrate, "that is not a very exacting demand. You shall have the convent; speak!"

"Then I have your word, Monsieur?"

"I think I said so."

"Then," said Lorenza, "take this coffer, — it contains mysteries which will make you tremble for the safety of the king and his dominions."

"Then you know these mysteries?"

"Only partially; but I know they exist."

"And that they are important?"

"That they are terrible."

"Political secrets, you say?"

"Have you never heard that there existed a secret society?"

"Ah! the freemasons?"

"The invisibles."

"Yes; but I do not believe it."

"When you have opened this coffer, you will believe."

"Ah!" said Monsieur de Sartines, eagerly, "let me see;" and he took the coffer from Lorenza's hands. But suddenly, after a moment's reflection, he placed it upon the desk.

"No," said he, with an air of suspicion; "open the coffer yourself."

"But I have not the key."

"What! you have not the key? You bring me a coffer which contains the safety of a kingdom, and you forget the key?"

"Is it so very difficult, then, to open a lock?"

"No, not when one knows it." Then, after a moment's pause, he added: "We have in this place keys for all kinds of locks; you shall have a bunch (and he looked fixedly at Lorenza), and you shall open it yourself."

"Give it me," said Lorenza, simply.

Monsieur de Sartines held out a bunch of little keys of all kinds to the young woman. She took them; he touched her hand; it was cold as marble.

"But why," said he, "did you not bring the key of the coffer?"

"Because the master of the coffer never lets it out of his possession."

"And who is the master of the coffer, — this man who is more powerful than a king?"

"Who he is, no one can say. The Almighty alone knows how long he has lived; the deeds he accomplishes none see but God."

"But his name, — his name?"

"I have known him change it ten times."

"Well, that by which you generally address him?"

"Acharat."

"And he lives — "

"Rue Saint — "

Suddenly Lorenza started, shuddered, and let the coffer, which she held in the one hand, and the keys, which she held in the other, fall to the ground. She made an effort to reply, her lips were distorted convulsively, she raised her hands to her throat, as if the words she was about to utter had suffocated her; then, tossing her trembling arms aloft, she fell her whole length upon the carpet, unable to utter a single word.

"Poor girl!" murmured Monsieur de Sartines, "what the deuce is the matter with her? She is really very pretty. Ah! there is some jealousy at work in this project of revenge."

He rang the bell hastily, and in the mean time raised the young woman in his arms, who, with staring eyes and motionless lips, seemed already dead and unrelated to the world. Two valets entered.

"Carry this young lady carefully into the adjoining apartment," said he; "endeavor to revive her, but above all, use no violence. Go."

The valets obeyed, and carried Lorenza out.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COFFER.

WHEN he was alone, Monsieur de Sartines turned the coffer round and round with the air of a man who can appreciate the value of a discovery. Then he stretched out his hands and picked up the bundle of keys which had fallen from Lorenza's hands. He tried them all; none would fit. He took several similar bunches from his drawer. These bunches contained keys of all sizes, — keys of all sorts of articles, coffers included; common keys and microscopic keys. Monsieur de Sartines might be said to possess a pattern of every key known. He tried twenty, fifty, a hundred; not one would even turn round.

The magistrate concluded, therefore, that the lock was only a semblance of a lock, and that consequently his keys were only make-believe keys. He then took a small chisel and a little hammer from the same drawer, and with his white hand, buried in an ample frill of Mechlin lace, he burst open the lock, the faithful guardian of the coffer. A bundle of papers appeared, instead of the destructive machine he had feared to find there, or poisons which should diffuse a fatal odor around, and deprive France of its most useful magistrate.

The first words which met the magistrate's eye were the following, written in a handwriting which was evidently feigned: "Master, it is time to abandon the name of Balsamo." There was no signature, but merely the three letters, L. P. D. "Ha!" said he, twitching the curls of his

wig, "if I do not know the writing, I think I know the name. Balsamo, — let me see; I must search the B's."

Monsieur de Sartines opened one of his twenty-four drawers, and took from it a list, arranged in alphabetical order, written in a fine handwriting full of abbreviations, and containing three or four hundred names, preceded, followed, and accompanied by flaming notes. "Oh, oh!" he murmured, "here is a long article on this Balsamo;" and he read the whole page with unequivocal signs of dissatisfaction. Then he replaced the list in the drawer, and continued the examination of the coffer. He had not proceeded far before his brow assumed a darker hue, and soon he came to a note full of names and ciphers.

This paper seemed important; it was much worn at the edges, and filled with pencil-marks. Monsieur de Sartines rang the bell; a servant appeared. "The assistance of the chancery clerk," said the minister, — "immediately. Let him come through the reception-rooms from the office, to save time."

The valet retired. Two minutes afterward a clerk with a pen in his hand, his hat under one arm, a large register under the other, and wearing sleeves of black serge over his coat-sleeves, appeared on the threshold of the cabinet. Monsieur de Sartines perceived his entrance in the mirror before him, and handed him the paper over his shoulder. "Decipher this," said he.

"Yes, Monseigneur," replied the clerk.

This decipherer of riddles was a little thin man, with pinched lips, eyebrows contracted by study, pale features, and head pointed both at top and bottom, a narrow chin a receding forehead, projecting cheek-bones, hollow and dull eyes, which sometimes sparkled with intelligence. Monsieur de Sartines called him La Fouine.

"Sit down," said the magistrate to him, on seeing him

rather embarrassed, by his note-book, his code of ciphers, his paper, and his pen.

La Fouine modestly took his seat upon the corner of a stool, drew his knees together, and began to write upon them, turning over his dictionary and searching his memory, with an impassive countenance. In five minutes he had written :—

§

"An order to assemble three thousand brothers in Paris.

§

"An order to form three circles and six lodges.

§

"An order to form a guard for the Grand Copt, and to institute four dwellings for him, one in a royal household.

§

"An order to place five hundred thousand francs at his disposal for a police.

§

"An order to enrol in the first of the Parisian circles the flower of literature and philosophy.

§

"An order to hire or to gain over the magistracy, and particularly to make sure of the lieutenant of police, by corruption, violence, or cunning."

Here La Fouine stopped for a moment,—not that the poor man was reflecting, he took care not to do that; it would have been a crime,—but because his page was filled and the ink yet wet, so that he was obliged to wait for its drying before he could proceed.

Monsieur de Sartines, becoming impatient, snatched the paper from his hands and read it.

At the last paragraph, such an expression of fear was painted on his face that he turned a deeper pale at seeing

himself change color in the mirror of his secretary. He did not return the paper to his clerk, but handed him a fresh sheet. The clerk began again, and wrote as fast as he deciphered, — which he did with a facility terrifying for all writers in cipher. This time Monsieur de Sartines read over his shoulder: —

"To drop the name of Balsamo, which is already too well known in Paris, and to take that of the Comte de Fe —"

A large blot of ink concealed the rest of the word.

While Monsieur de Sartines was endeavoring to make out the last syllable, which would complete the name, a bell was rung outside, and a valet entering, announced: "The Comte de Fenix."

Monsieur de Sartines uttered a cry; and at the risk of demolishing the harmonious edifice of his wig, he clasped his hands above his head, and hastened to dismiss his clerk by a secret door. Then, resuming his place before the desk, he said to the valet: "Introduce him."

A few seconds afterward Monsieur de Sartines perceived in his glass the stern profile of the count, whom he had already seen at court on the day of Madame Dubarry's presentation. Balsamo entered without hesitation.

Monsieur de Sartines rose, bowed coldly to the count, and crossing one leg over the other, he seated himself ceremoniously in his armchair. At the first glance the magistrate had divined the cause and the aim of this visit. At the first glance also Balsamo had perceived the opened box, half emptied upon Monsieur de Sartines' desk. His look, however hasty, at the coffer, did not escape the lieutenant of police.

"To what chance do I owe the honor of your presence, Monsieur le Comte?" asked Monsieur de Sartines.

"Monsieur," replied Balsamo, with a most affable smile, "I have had the honor of being presented to all the sovereigns, ministers, and ambassadors of Europe, but I have not found any one to present me to you; I have therefore come to introduce myself."

"In truth, Monsieur," replied the lieutenant of police, "you arrive most opportunely; for I am quite sure that had you not come of yourself, I should have had the honor of sending for you."

"Ah, indeed!" said Balsamo; "that is a coincidence!"

Monsieur de Sartines inclined his head with a sarcastic smile.

"Shall I be so fortunate as to be of any use to you?" asked Balsamo; and these words were uttered without a shadow of emotion or of uneasiness clouding his smiling features.

"You have travelled much, Monsieur le Comte?" asked the lieutenant of police.

"A great deal, Monsieur."

"Ah!"

"You wish for some geographical information, perhaps? A man of your capacity does not confine his observations to France alone; he surveys Europe, — the world."

"'Geographical,' is not exactly the word, Count. 'Moral' would be more correct."

"Have no scruples I beg; for the one, as for the other, I am wholly at your service."

"Well, Monsieur le Comte, picture to yourself that I am in search of a most dangerous man, — a man who, on my word, is a complete atheist."

"Oh!"

"A conspirator."

"Oh!"

"A forger."

"Oh!"

"A debauchee, a false coiner, a quack, a charlatan, the chief of a society, a man whose history I have in my books, in this box that you see here, — everywhere, indeed."

"Ah! yes, I comprehend," said Balsamo; "you have the history, but not the man."

"No."

"The devil! The latter is the more important, it seems to me."

"Of course; but you will see that we are not far from having him. Certainly Proteus had not more forms, nor Jupiter more names, than this mysterious traveller. Acharat in Egypt, Balsamo in Italy, Somini in Sardinia, the Marquis d'Anna in Malta, the Marquis Pellegrini in Corsica, and lastly, the Comte de —?"

"Comte de —?" added Balsamo.

"The last name, Monsieur, I have not been able to read. But I am sure you will assist me, will you not? For there is no doubt you must have met this man during your travels in each of the countries I have just now named."

"Enlighten me a little, I entreat," said Balsamo, quietly.

"Ah! I understand; you wish for a description of his person, do you not, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Yes, Monsieur, if you please."

"Well!" said Monsieur de Sartines, fixing a glance which he intended to be inquisitorial upon Balsamo, "he is a man of your age, of your size, of your figure. He is sometimes a great lord, scattering money on all sides; sometimes a charlatan, searching into the secrets of Nature; sometimes a gloomy member of some mysterious brotherhood which meets by night and swears death to kings, and the destruction of thrones."

"Oh!" said Balsamo, "that is very vague."

"How, vague?"

"If you knew how many men I have seen who resemble this description."

"Really?"

"Of course; and you must be a little more precise if you wish me to assist you. In the first place, do you know in which country he prefers to live?"

"He dwells in all."

"But at present, for instance?"

"At present he is in France."

"And what is he doing in France?"

"He is directing an immense conspiracy."

"Ah! that is indeed some clew; and if you know what conspiracy he directs, you hold the thread at the end of which, in all probability, you will find your man."

"I am quite of your opinion."

"Well, if you think so, why do you ask my advice? It is useless."

"Ah! but I am not yet decided."

"On what point?"

"Whether I shall arrest him or not."

"I do not understand the *not*, Monsieur; for if he conspires —"

"Yes, but if he is partially defended by some name or by some title?"

"Ah, I understand! But what name? — what title? You must tell me that before I can assist you in your search, Monsieur."

"Why, Monsieur, I have told you that I know the name under which he conceals himself; but —"

"But do you not know the one under which he shows himself, — is that it?"

"Yes, otherwise —"

"Otherwise you would arrest him?"

"Instantly."

"Well, my dear Monsieur de Sartines, it is very fortunate, as you said just now, that I arrived at this moment; for I will do you the service you require."

"You?"

"Yes."

"You will tell me his name?"

"Yes."

"The name under which he shows himself?"

"Yes."

"Then you know him?"

"Very well."

"And what is his name?" asked Monsieur de Sartines, expecting some falsehood.

"The Comte de Fenix."

"What! the name by which you were announced?"

"The name by which I was announced, — yes."

"Your name?"

"My name."

"Then this Acharat, this Somini, this Marquis d'Anna, this Marquis Pellegrini, this Joseph Balsamo, is you?"

"Yes," said Balsamo, quietly, "is myself."

It was a minute before Monsieur de Sartines could recover from the vertigo which this frank avowal caused him.

"You see, I knew it," said he. "I recognized you. I knew that Joseph Balsamo and the Comte de Fenix were the same."

"Ah!" said Balsamo, "you are a great minister, — I confess it!"

"And you are most imprudent," said the magistrate, advancing toward the bell.

"Imprudent, why?"

"Because I am going to have you arrested."

"What say you?" replied Balsamo, stepping between the magistrate and the bell. "You are going to arrest me?"

"*Pardieu!* what can you do to prevent me, may I ask?"

"You ask me?"

"Yes."

"My dear lieutenant of police, I will blow your brains out;" and Balsamo drew from his pocket a charming little pistol mounted in silver gilt, — which, from its appearance, might have been chased by Benvenuto Cellini, — and calmly levelled it at the forehead of Monsieur de Sartines, who turned pale and sank into an armchair.

"There," said Balsamo, drawing another chair close to that occupied by the lieutenant of police, and sitting down, "now that we are comfortably seated, we can chat a little."

CHAPTER XXV.

CONVERSATION.

MONSIEUR DE SARTINES was a moment or two recovering from his rather severe alarm. He had seen the threatening muzzle of the pistol presented before his very eye; he had even felt the cold metal of the barrel upon his forehead. At last he recovered. "Monsieur," said he, "you have an advantage over me. Knowing what sort of a man I had to deal with, I did not take the precautions usually adopted against common malefactors."

"Oh, Monsieur!" replied Balsamo, "now you are getting angry, and use injurious expressions. Do you not see how unjust you are? I come to do you a service."

Monsieur de Sartines made a movement.

"Yes, Monsieur, to serve you," resumed Balsamo, "and you misunderstand my intentions; you speak to me of conspirators at the very time when I come to denounce a conspiracy to you."

But Balsamo talked in vain. Monsieur de Sartines did not at that moment pay any great attention to the words of his dangerous visitor; and the word "conspiracy," which on other occasions would have been sufficient to make him bound from his seat, he hardly noticed.

"Since you know so well who I am, Monsieur, you are aware of my mission in France. Sent by his Majesty the great Frederick, I am more or less secretly the ambassador of his Prussian Majesty. Now by ambassador is understood an inquirer; in my capacity as inquirer I am igno-

rant of nothing that happens; and a subject upon which I am particularly well informed is the monopoly of grain."

However unpretendingly Balsamo uttered these last words, they nevertheless produced more effect upon the lieutenant of police than all the others, for they made him attentive. He slowly raised his head.

"What is that about grain?" said he, affecting as much assurance as Balsamo himself had displayed at the beginning of the interview. "Be good enough, in your turn, to instruct me, Monsieur."

"Willingly, Monsieur," said Balsamo. "This is the whole matter —"

"I am all attention."

"Oh, you do not need to tell me that! Some very clever speculators have persuaded his Majesty the king of France that he ought to construct granaries for his people in case of scarcity. These granaries, therefore, have been constructed. While they were doing it, they thought it as well to make them large. Nothing was spared, neither stone nor brick, and they were made very large."

"Well?"

"Well, they had then to be filled. Empty granaries were useless, therefore they were filled."

"Well! Monsieur," said Monsieur de Sartines, not seeing very clearly as yet what Balsamo was driving at.

"Well! you may readily conceive that to fill these very large granaries, a great quantity of grain was required. Is that not evident?"

"Yes."

"To continue, then. A large quantity of grain withdrawn from circulation is one way of starving the people; for, mark this: any amount taken from the circulation is equivalent to a failure in the production. A thousand sacks of corn more in the granary are a thousand sacks of

corn less in the market-place. If you only multiply these thousand sacks by ten, the corn will rise considerably."

Monsieur de Sartines was seized with an irritating cough. Balsamo paused, and waited till the cough was quieted.

"You see, then," he continued, as soon as the lieutenant of police would permit him, "you see that the speculator in these granaries is enriched by the amount of the rise in value. Is that clear to you?"

"Perfectly clear, Monsieur," said Monsieur de Sartines; "but, as far as I can understand, it seems that you have the presumption to denounce to me a conspiracy or a crime of which his Majesty is the author?"

"Exactly," said Balsamo; "you understand me very well."

"That is a bold step, Monsieur; and I confess that I am rather curious to see how his Majesty will take your accusation; I fear much the result will be precisely the same that I proposed to myself on looking over the papers in this box before your arrival. Take care, Monsieur; your destination in either case will be the Bastille."

"Ah! now you do not understand me at all."

"How so?"

"Good heavens! how incorrect an opinion you form of me, and how deeply you wrong me, Monsieur, in taking me for a fool! What! you imagine I intend to attack the king, — I, an ambassador, an inquirer? Why, that would be the work of a simpleton! Hear me to the end, I beg of you."

Monsieur de Sartines bowed.

"The persons who have discovered this conspiracy against the French people (forgive me for taking up your valuable time, Monsieur, but you will see directly that it is not lost), — they who have discovered this conspiracy against

the French people are economists, — laborious and exact men, who by their careful investigation of this underhand game have discovered that the king does not play alone. They know well that his Majesty keeps an exact register of the rate of corn in the different markets; they know that his Majesty rubs his hands with glee when the rise has produced him eight or ten thousand crowns; but they know also that beside his Majesty there stands a man whose position facilitates the sales, a man who naturally, thanks to certain functions (he is a functionary, you must know), superintends the purchases, the receipts, the storage, — a man, in short, who manages for the king. Now, these economists — these microscopic observers, as I call them — will not attack the king, for of course they are not mad, but they will attack, my dear Monsieur, the man, the functionary, the agent, who thus intrigues for his Majesty."

Monsieur de Sartines endeavored in vain to restore the equilibrium of his wig.

"Now," continued Balsamo, "I am coming to the point. Just as you, who have a police, knew that I was the Comte de Fenix, so I know that you are Monsieur de Sartines."

"Well, what then?" said the embarrassed magistrate. "Yes, I am Monsieur de Sartines, — a fine discovery?"

"Ah! but cannot you understand that this Monsieur de Sartines is precisely the man of the price list, of the underhand dealings, of the stowing away, — he who, either with or without the king's cognizance, traffics with the food of twenty-seven millions of French people, whom his office requires him to feed on the best possible terms? Now, just imagine the effect of such a discovery. You are not much beloved by the people; the king is not a very considerate man: as soon as the cries of the famishing

millions demand your head, the king — to avert all suspicion of connivance with you, if there is connivance, or if there is no connivance, to do justice — will cause you to be hanged upon a gibbet, like Enguerrand de Marigny. Do you recollect Enguerrand?"

"Imperfectly," said Monsieur de Sartines, turning very pale; "and it is a proof of very bad taste, I think, Monsieur, to talk of gibbets to a man of my rank."

"Oh! if I alluded to it," replied Balsamo, "it was because I think I see poor Enguerrand still before me. I assure you he was a perfect gentleman, from Normandy, of a very ancient family and a noble descent. He was chamberlain of France, captain of the Louvre, comptroller of finance and of buildings; he was Count of Longueville, which county is more considerable than yours of Alby. Well, Monsieur, I saw him hanged upon the gallows of Montfaucon, which he had himself constructed! Thank God, it was not a crime to have said to him, 'Enguerrand, my dear Enguerrand, take care! You are dipping into the finances to an extent that Charles of Valois will never pardon.' He would not listen to me, Monsieur, and unfortunately he perished. Alas! if you knew how many prefects of police I have seen, from Pontius Pilate down to Monsieur Bertin de Belle-Isle, Comte de Bourdeilles, Lord of Brantôme, your predecessor, who first introduced the lantern, and prohibited the scales!"

Monsieur de Sartines rose, and endeavored in vain to conceal the agitation which preyed upon him. "Well," said he, "you can accuse me if you like. Of what importance is the testimony of a man such as you, who has no influence or connections?"

"Take care, Monsieur," said Balsamo; "frequently those who seem to have no connections are connected far and wide. And when I shall write the history of these

corn speculations to my correspondent Frederick, who, you know, is a philosopher; when Frederick shall hasten to communicate the affair, with his comments upon it, to Monsieur Arouet de Voltaire; when the latter, with his pen, whose reputation, at least, I hope you know, shall have metamorphosed it into a little comic tale in the style of 'L'homme aux quarante Écus;' when Monsieur d'Alembert, that excellent geometrician, shall have calculated that the corn withdrawn from the public consumption by you might have fed a hundred millions of men for two or three years; when Helvetius shall have shown that the price of this corn, converted into crowns of six francs and piled up, would touch the moon, or, into bank-notes placed side by side, would reach to St. Petersburg; when this calculation shall have inspired Monsieur de la Harpe to write a bad drama, Diderot a family conversation, and Monsieur Jean Jacques Rousseau, of Geneva, who has a tolerably sharp bite when he chooses, a terrible paraphrase of this conversation, with commentaries; when Monsieur Caron de Beaumarchais — may Heaven preserve you from treading on his toes! — shall have written a memoir, Monsieur Grimm a little letter, Monsieur d'Holbach a thundering attack, Monsieur de Marmontel an amiable moral tale, in which he will kill you by defending you badly; when you shall be spoken of in the Café de la Régence, the Palais Royal, at Audinot's, among the king's dancers, — maintained, as you know, by Monsieur Nicolet, — ah! Comte d'Alby, you will be in a much worse case than was that poor Enguerrand de Marigny, whom you would not hear me mention, when he stood under the gallows; for he asserted his innocence, and that with so much earnestness that, on my word of honor, I believed him when he affirmed it to me."

At these words Monsieur de Sartines, no longer paying

any heed to decorum, took off his wig and wiped his bald head, which was bathed in perspiration. "Well," said he, "so be it! But all that will not prevent me in the least. Ruin me if you can; you have your proofs, I have mine. Keep your secret, I shall keep the coffer."

"Oh! Monsieur," said Balsamo, "that is another error into which I am surprised that a man of your talents should fall; this coffer — "

"Well, what of it?"

"You will not keep."

"Oh!" exclaimed Monsieur de Sartines, with a sarcastic smile, "true; I had forgotten that the Comte de Fenix is a gentleman of the highway who rifles travellers with the strong hand. I forgot your pistol, because you have replaced it in your pocket. Excuse me, my lord ambassador."

"But, good heavens! why speak of pistols, Monsieur de Sartines? You surely do not believe that I mean to carry off the coffer by main force; that when on the stairs I may hear your bell ring and your voice cry, 'Stop thief!' Oh, no! When I say that you will not keep this coffer, I mean that you will restore it to me willingly, and without constraint."

"What, I?" exclaimed the magistrate, placing his clenched hand upon the disputed object with so much weight that he nearly broke it.

"Yes, you."

"Oh! very well, Monsieur, mock away; but as to taking this coffer, I tell you you shall have it only with my life. And have I not risked my life a thousand times? Do I not owe it, to the last drop, to the service of his Majesty? Kill me, — you can do so; but the noise will summon my avengers, and I shall have voice enough left to convict you of all your crimes. Ah! give you back

this coffer," added he, with a bitter smile, — "all hell should not wrest it from me!"

"And therefore I shall not employ the intervention of the subterranean powers. I shall be satisfied with that of the person who is just now knocking at the gate of your court-yard."

And in fact, just at that moment, three blows, struck with an air of command, were heard outside.

"And whose carriage," continued Balsamo, "is just now entering the court."

"It seems, then, that it is some friend of yours who is coming to honor me with a visit?"

"As you say, — a friend of mine."

"And I shall hand this coffer to that friend?"

"Yes, my dear Monsieur de Sartines, you will give it to that friend."

The lieutenant of police had not finished his gesture of lofty disdain when a valet opened the door hastily, and announced that Madame Dubarry wished for an interview.

Monsieur de Sartines started, and looked in stupefied amazement at Balsamo, who required all his self-command to avoid laughing in the face of the honorable magistrate. Close behind the valet appeared a lady who seemed to have no need of permission to enter. It was the beautiful countess, whose flowing and perfumed skirts gently rustled as they brushed through the doorway of the cabinet.

"You, Madame, you!" exclaimed Monsieur de Sartines, who in the instinct of terror had seized the open coffer in both hands, and clasped it to his breast.

"Good-day, Sartines," said the countess, with her gay smile; then, turning to Balsamo, "Good-day, dear Count," she added; and she gave her hand to the latter, who familiarly bent over the white fingers, and pressed his lips

where the royal lips had so often rested. In this movement Balsamo managed to whisper a few words aside to the countess, which Sartines could not hear.

"Ah!" exclaimed the countess, "there is my coffer."

"Your coffer!" stammered Monsieur de Sartines.

"Of course, my coffer. Oh! you have opened it; you do not observe much ceremony!"

"But, Madame —"

"Oh, it is delightful! The idea occurred to me at once that some one had stolen this coffer; and then I said to myself, 'I must go to Sartines; he will find it for me.' You did not wait till I asked you; you found it beforehand, — a thousand thanks!"

"And as you see," said Balsamo, "Monsieur has even opened it."

"Yes, really, — who could have thought it? Why, it is abominable, Sartines!"

"Madame, notwithstanding all the respect I have for you," said the lieutenant of police, "I fear that you are imposed upon."

"Imposed, Monsieur!" said Balsamo. "Do you perchance mean that word for me?"

"I know what I know," replied Monsieur de Sartines.

"And I know nothing," whispered Madame Dubarry in a low voice to Balsamo. "Come, tell me what is the matter, my dear Count! You have claimed the fulfilment of the promise I made you, to grant the first favor you should ask. I keep my word like a woman of honor, and here I am. Tell me what must I do for you?"

"Madame," replied Balsamo, aloud, "you confided the care of this coffer and everything it contains to me, a few days ago."

"Of course," answered Madame Dubarry, replying by a look to the count's appealing glance.

"Of course!" exclaimed Monsieur de Sartines; "you say 'of course,' Madame?"

"Yes; Madame pronounced the words loud enough for you to hear them, I should think."

"A box which contains perhaps ten conspiracies!"

"Ah! Monsieur de Sartines, you are aware that that word is rather an unfortunate one for you; do not repeat it. Madame asks for her box again; give it her, — that is all."

"Do you ask me for it, Madame?" said Monsieur de Sartines, trembling with anger.

"Yes, my dear magistrate."

"But learn, at least —"

Balsamo looked at the countess.

"You can tell me nothing I do not know," said Madame Dubarry; "give me the coffer. You may believe I did not come for nothing!"

"But in the name of the living God, Madame! in the name of his Majesty's safety —"

Balsamo made an impatient gesture.

"The coffer, Monsieur!" said the countess, abruptly; "the coffer, — yes or no? Reflect well before you refuse."

"As you please, Madame!" said Monsieur de Sartines, humbly; and he handed the coffer, in which Balsamo had already replaced all the papers scattered over the desk, to the countess.

Madame Dubarry turned toward Balsamo with a charming smile. "Count," said she, "will you carry this coffer to my carriage for me, and give me your hand through all these antechambers, in which are so many ugly faces? Thanks, Sartines!"

And Balsamo was already advancing toward the door with his protectress, when he saw Monsieur de Sartines moving toward the bell. "Countess," said Balsamo,

stopping his enemy with a look, "be good enough to tell Monsieur de Sartines, who is quite enraged with me for having reclaimed your coffer, — be good enough to tell him how much grieved you would be if any misfortune were to happen to me through the agency of the lieutenant of police, and how displeased you would be with him."

The countess smiled on Balsamo. "You hear what the count says, my dear Sartines? Well, it is the simple truth! The count is an excellent friend of mine, and I should be mortally angry with you if you offended him in any way whatsoever. Adieu, Sartines!" and placing her hand in Balsamo's, who carried the coffer, Madame Dubarry left the cabinet of the lieutenant of police.

Monsieur de Sartines saw them depart without displaying that fury which Balsamo expected him to manifest. "Go!" said the conquered magistrate; "go, you have the box, but I have the woman!" and to compensate himself for his disappointment, he rang in a way to break all the bells in the house.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SARTINES BEGINS TO THINK BALSAMO A SORCERER.

At the violent ringing of Monsieur de Sartines' bell, an usher entered.

"Well," asked the magistrate, "that woman?"

"What woman, Monseigneur?"

"The woman who fainted here just now, and whom I confided to your care."

"Monseigneur, she is quite well," replied the usher.

"Very good; bring her to me."

"Where shall I find her, Monseigneur?"

"What do you mean? In that room, of course."

"But she is no longer there, Monseigneur."

"Not there! Then where is she?"

"I do not know."

"She has gone?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"But she could not stand!"

"Monseigneur, it is true that for some moments she remained in a swoon; but five minutes after the Comte de Fenix entered Monseigneur's cabinet, she awoke from this strange fit, which neither essences nor salts affected in the least. Then she opened her eyes, rose, and breathed with an air of satisfaction."

"Well, what then?"

"She proceeded toward the door; and as Monseigneur had not ordered that she should be detained, she was allowed to depart."

"Gone!" cried Monsieur de Sartines. "Ah, wretch that you are! I shall send you all to rot at Bicêtre! Quick, quick! send me my head-clerk!"

The usher retired hastily to obey the order he had received.

"The scoundrel is a sorcerer!" muttered the unfortunate magistrate. "I am lieutenant of police to the king, but he is lieutenant of police to the devil!"

The reader has no doubt understood what Monsieur de Sartines could not explain to himself. Immediately after the incident of the pistol, and while the lieutenant of police was endeavoring to regain his equanimity, Balsamo, profiting by the momentary respite, had turned successively to the four cardinal points, quite sure of finding Lorenza in the direction of one of them, and had ordered her to rise, to go out, and to return, by the way she had come, to the Rue Saint Claude. The moment this wish had been formed in Balsamo's mind, a magnetic current was established between him and the young woman, and the latter, obeying the order she had received by intuition, rose and went away without meeting any opposition.

Monsieur de Sartines that same evening took to his bed and caused himself to be bled, — the revulsion had been too strong for him to bear it with impunity; and the doctor assured him that a quarter of an hour more would have brought on an attack of apoplexy.

Meanwhile Balsamo had accompanied the countess to her carriage, and had attempted to take his leave of her; but she was not a woman to let him go thus without knowing, or at least without endeavoring to discover, the solution of the strange event which had taken place before

her. She begged the count to enter her carriage. The count obeyed, and a groom led Djerid behind.

"You see now, Count," said she, "whether I am true or not, and whether, when I have called any one my friend, I have spoken with the lips merely, or from the heart. I was just setting out for Luciennes, where the king had said he would pay me a visit to-morrow morning; but your letter arrived, and I left everything for you. Many would have been frightened at the words 'conspiracies' and 'conspirators' which Monsieur de Sartines threw in your teeth; but I looked at your countenance before I acted, and did as you wished me."

"Madame," replied Balsamo, "you have amply repaid the slight service I was able to render you; but with me nothing is lost,—you will find that I can be grateful. Do not imagine, however, that I am a criminal, — a conspirator, as Monsieur de Sartines said. That worthy magistrate had received, from some person who betrayed me, this coffer, containing some chemical and hermetical secrets, — which I shall share with you, that you may preserve your wonderful, your splendid beauty, and your dazzling youth. Now, seeing the ciphers of my formulas, this excellent Monsieur de Sartines called the chancery clerk to assist him, who, in order not to be found wanting, interpreted them after his own fashion. I think I have already told you, Madame, that the profession is not yet entirely freed from the dangers which were attendant on it in the Middle Ages. Only young and intelligent minds like yours favor it. In short, Madame, you have saved me from a great embarrassment; I thank you for it, and shall prove my gratitude."

"But what would he have done with you if I had not come to your assistance?"

"To annoy King Frederick, whom his Majesty hates,

he would have imprisoned me in Vincennes or the Bastille. I should have escaped from it, I know, — thanks to my process for melting stone with a breath, — but I should have lost my coffer, which contains, as I have had the honor of telling you, many curious and invaluable formulas, wrested by a happy venture of science from the eternal shades."

"Ah, Count! you at once delight and reassure me. Then you promise me a philtre to make me young again?"

"Yes."

"And when will you give it me?"

"Oh! you need be in no hurry. You may ask for it twenty years hence, beautiful countess. In the mean time I think you do not wish to become quite a child again."

"You are, in truth, a charming man. One question more, and I will let you go, for you seem in haste."

"Speak, Countess."

"You said that some one had betrayed you. Is it a man, or a woman?"

"A woman."

"Ah, ah! Count, — a love affair?"

"Alas! yes, complicated by an almost frantic jealousy, which has produced the pleasant effect you have seen. It is a woman who, not daring to stab me with a knife because she knows I cannot be killed, wanted to imprison and ruin me."

"What, ruin you?"

"She endeavored to do so, at least."

"Count, I will stop here," said the countess, laughing. "Is it the quicksilver in your veins that gives you that immortality which makes people betray you, instead of killing you? Shall I set you down here, or drive you to your own house?"

"No, Madame, I cannot allow you to inconvenience yourself on my account. I have my horse Djerid."

"Ah! that wonderful animal which, it is said, outstrips the wind?"

"He seems to please you, Madame."

"He is in truth a magnificent steed."

"Allow me to offer him to you, on the condition that you alone ride him."

"Oh! no, thank you; I do not ride on horseback, — or, at least, I am a very timid horsewoman. I am as much obliged to you, however, as if I accepted your offer. Adieu! my dear Count; do not forget my philtre, — in ten years."

"I said twenty."

"Count, you know the proverb, — 'a bird in the hand—;' and if you could even give it me in five years — There is no knowing what may happen."

"Whenever you please, Countess. Are you not aware that I am entirely at your command?"

"Only one word more, Count."

"I listen, Madame."

"It proves that I have great confidence in you to speak of it."

Balsamo, who had already alighted from the carriage, suppressed his impatience, and approached the countess.

"It is reported everywhere," continued Madame Dubarry, "that the king is rather taken with that little Taverney."

"Ah! Madame," said Balsamo, "is it possible?"

"A very great partiality, it is said. You must tell me if it is true. Count, do not deceive me; I beseech you to treat me as a friend. Tell me the truth, Count."

"Madame," replied Balsamo, "I will do more; I will promise you that Mademoiselle Andrée shall never be the king's mistress."

"And why not?" cried Madame Dubarry.

"Because I do not wish it," said Balsamo.

"Oh!" said Madame Dubarry, incredulously.

"You doubt."

"Is it not allowed?"

"Never doubt the truths of science, Madame. You have believed me when I said yes; believe me when I say no."

"But, in short, have you the means—?" she paused, smiling.

"Well?"

"Means capable of destroying the king's will, or conquering his whims?"

Balsamo smiled. "I create sympathies," said he.

"Yes, I know that."

"You believe it, even."

"I believe it."

"Well, I can create aversions also, and if needful, impossibilities. Therefore, Countess, make your mind easy; I am on guard."

Balsamo uttered all these fragments of sentences with an absence of mind which Madame Dubarry would not have taken as she did for inspiration, had she known the feverish anxiety which Balsamo felt to be with Lorenza as quickly as possible.

"Well, Count," said she, "assuredly you are not only my prophet of happiness, but also my guardian angel. Count, mark my words; defend me, and I will defend you. Alliance, alliance!"

"Agreed, Madame," replied Balsamo, kissing the countess's hand. Then closing the door of the carriage, which the countess had stopped upon the Champs Élysées, he mounted his horse, who neighed joyously, and was soon lost to view in the shadows of night.

"To Luciennes!" said the countess, consoled.

Balsamo whistled softly, and gently pressed his knees against Djerid's side, who started off at a gallop. Five minutes afterward he was in the vestibule of the Rue Saint Claude looking at Fritz. "Well?" asked he, anxiously.

"Yes, Master," replied the domestic, who was accustomed to read his looks.

"She has returned?"

"She is upstairs."

"In which room?"

"In the chamber of furs."

"In what state is she?"

"Oh! very much exhausted. She ran so quickly that although I saw her coming, for I was watching for her, I had scarcely time to hasten to meet her."

"Indeed!"

"Oh! I was quite alarmed. She swept on like a tempest; rushed upstairs without taking breath; and when she entered the room, she fell upon the large black lion's skin. You will find her there."

Balsamo hastily ascended, and found Lorenza where Fritz had said. She was struggling in vain against the first convulsions of a nervous crisis. The fluid had weighed upon her too long already, and forced her to violent efforts. She suffered, she moaned; it seemed as if a mountain weighed upon her breast, and that she endeavored with both hands to remove it.

Balsamo looked at her with eyes angrily flashing; and taking her in his arms, he carried her into her apartment, the mysterious door of which closed behind him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

Balsamo had just entered Lorenza's apartment, and was preparing to awake her and overwhelm her with all the reproaches which his gloomy anger prompted, fully determined to punish her according to the dictates of that anger, when a triple knock upon the ceiling announced that Althotas had watched for his return, and wished to speak to him.

Nevertheless Balsamo waited; he was hoping either that he had been mistaken, or that the signal had been accidental, when the impatient old man repeated his blows. Balsamo, therefore, — fearing, no doubt, to see him descend, as he had done before, or that Lorenza, awakened by an influence opposed to his own, might acquire the knowledge of some new matter no less dangerous for him than that of his political secrets, — Balsamo, therefore, after having, if we may so express it, charged Lorenza with an additional quantity of the electric fluid, left the room to visit Althotas.

It was high time; the trap-door was already half-way from the ceiling. Althotas had left his wheeled armchair, and was seen squatting down upon the movable part of the ceiling, which rose and fell. He saw Balsamo leave Lorenza's room.

Squatting thus, the old man was at once hideous and terrible to behold. His white face, or rather some parts of

that face, which still seemed to be alive, were purple with the violence of his rage. His meagre and bony hands, like those of a human skeleton, trembled and shook; his hollow eyes seemed to vacillate in their deep caverns; and in a language unknown even to his disciple, he was loading him with the most violent invectives.

Having left his armchair to touch the spring, Althotas seemed to live and move only by the aid of his long arms, lean and angular as those of a spider; and issuing, as we have said, from his chamber, inaccessible to all but Balsamo, he was about to descend to the lower apartment. In order that this feeble old man, indolent as he was, should leave his armchair, that cleverly constructed machine which spared him all fatigue, and consent to perform one of the actions of common life, — in order that he should undergo the care and fatigue of such a change in his usual habits, it was necessary that some extraordinary excitement should have withdrawn him from his meditative life, and compelled him to enter again reality.

Balsamo, taken as it were in the fact, seemed at first astonished, then uneasy.

"Ah!" exclaimed Althotas, "there you are, you good-for-nothing, you ingrate! There you are, coward, who desert your master!"

Balsamo called all his patience to his aid, as he invariably did when he spoke to the old man. "But," he replied, quietly, "I think, my friend, you have only just called me."

"Your friend?" exclaimed Althotas; "your friend? you vile human creature! You dare to speak the language of equality to me! I have been a friend to you, — more than a friend, a father, — a father who has educated, instructed, and enriched you. But you my friend? Oh, no! for you abandon me; you assassinate me!"

"Come, Master, you disturb your bile; you irritate your blood; you will make yourself ill."

"Ill? Nonsense! Have I ever been ill, except when you made me a sharer, in spite of myself, in some of the miseries of your impure human-kind? Ill! Have you forgotten that it is I who heal others?"

"Well, Master," replied Balsamo, coldly, "I am here. Let us not lose time in vain."

"Yes, I advise you to remind me of that. Time, time! which you oblige me to economize, — me, for whom this element, circumscribed to all the world, should be endless, unlimited! Yes, my time flies; yes, my time is lost, — my time, like the time of other people, falls minute by minute into the gulf of eternity, when for me it ought to be eternity itself!"

"Come, Master," said Balsamo, with unalterable patience, lowering the trap to the ground as he spoke, placing himself upon it, and causing it to rise again to its place in the room; "come, what is it you want? You say I starve you; but are you not in your forty days of fasting?"

"Yes, yes, doubtless; the work of regeneration began thirty-two days ago."

"Then tell me, of what do you complain? I see two or three bottles of rain-water, the only kind you drink, still remaining."

"Of course; but do you imagine I am a silkworm to complete the grand work of renovation of youth and of transformation alone? Do you imagine that, powerless as I am, I can compose alone the elixir of life? Or think you that, sitting here in my chair, enervated by cooling drinks, my sole nourishment, I could have power of mind enough, when left to my own resources, without your assistance, to complete the minute work of my regeneration,

in which, as you, unhappy man, well know, I must be aided and supported by a friend?"

"I am here, Master, I am here. Answer me now," said Balsamo, replacing the old man in his chair almost in spite of himself, as he would have handled a hideous infant; "answer me, — you have not been in want of distilled water, for, as I said before, there are three bottles still remaining. This water, as you know, was all collected in the month of May; there are your biscuits of barley and of sesame, and I myself administered to you the white drops you prescribed."

"Yes, but the elixir! The elixir is not made! You do not remember it, for you were not there; it was your father, — your father, who was far more faithful than you are; but at the last fiftieth I had the elixir ready a month beforehand. I had my retreat on Mount Ararat. A Jew provided me with a Christian child still at its mother's breast, for its weight in gold. I bled it according to the rule; I took the last three drops of its arterial blood, and in an hour my elixir, which wanted only this ingredient, was composed. Therefore my first regeneration succeeded wonderfully well. My hair and teeth fell out during the convulsions which succeeded the absorption of that wondrous elixir, but they grew again, — the latter badly enough, I know, because I neglected the precaution of letting the elixir flow into my throat through a golden conduit. But my hair and my nails grew again in this second youth, and I began again to live as if I were only fifteen years of age. Now I am old again; I am bordering on the extreme limit; and if the elixir is not ready, if it is not safely enclosed in this bottle, if I do not bestow all possible care upon this work, the science of a century will be annihilated with me, and the admirable, the sublime secret I possess will be lost for man, who in me and

through me approaches divineness! Oh! if I fail, if I am mistaken, if I miss it, Acharat, it will be your fault; and take care, for my anger will be terrible, — terrible!" and as he uttered these last words, a livid glare shot from his dying eyeball, and the old man fell into a brief convulsion, which ended in a violent fit of coughing.

Balsamo instantly lavished the most eager attentions on him, and the old man recovered. His complexion had become death-like instead of pale. This feeble attack had weakened his strength so much that one would have thought he was dying.

"Come, Master," said Balsamo, "tell me plainly what you want."

"What I want!" said he, looking fixedly at Balsamo.

"Yes."

"What I want is this —"

"Speak; I hear you, and I will obey, if what you ask is possible."

"Possible, possible!" muttered the old man, contemptuously. "You know that everything is possible."

"Yes, with time and science."

"Science I have, and I am on the point of conquering time. My dose has succeeded. My strength has almost entirely left me. The white drops have caused the expulsion of all the remaining portion of my former nature. Youth, like the sap of the trees in May, rises under the old bark, and buds, so to speak, through the old wood. You may remark, Acharat, that the symptoms are excellent, — my voice is weak, my sight is three-quarters gone; sometimes I feel my mind wander; I have become insensible to the transition from heat to cold. I must therefore hasten to finish my elixir, in order that, on the completion of my second fifty years, I may at once pass from a hundred years old to twenty. The ingredients for the elixir

are all made, the conduit is ready; I want nothing but the three drops of blood I told you of."

Balsamo made a gesture of repugnance.

"Very well," said Althotas, "let us abandon the child, since it is so difficult, and since you prefer to shut yourself up the whole day with your mistress, to seeking it for me."

"You know, Master, that Lorenza is not my mistress," replied Balsamo.

"Oh! oh! oh!" exclaimed Althotas; "you say that! You think to impose on me as on the mass; you would make me believe in an immaculate creature, — and yet you are a man!"

"I swear to you, Master, that Lorenza is as pure as an angel; I swear to you that love, earthly felicity, domestic happiness, — I have sacrificed all to my project. For I also have my regenerating work; only, instead of applying it to myself alone, I shall apply it to all the world."

"Fool! poor fool!" cried Althotas; "I verily believe he is going to speak to me of his cataclysm of fleshworms, his revolutions of ant-hills, when I speak to him of life and eternal youth!"

"Which can be acquired only at the price of a fearful crime; and besides —"

"You doubt; I see you doubt, unhappy man!"

"No, Master; but since you give up the idea of procuring a child, tell me what do you want?"

"I must have the first virginal creature you can find, — man or woman; but a woman would be better, by reason of the affinity of the sexes, as I have discovered. Find me that, and quickly, for I have only eight days longer."

"Very well, Master, I will see, — I will search."

Another lightning flash, more terrible than the first,

sparkled in the old man's eyes. "You will see! you will search!" he cried. "Oh! is that your reply? I expected it, and I don't know why I am surprised. And since when, thou worm of the earth, was the creature entitled to speak thus to its master? Ah! you see me powerless, disabled, supplicating, and you are fool enough to think me at your mercy! Yes or no, Acharat? And answer me without embarrassment or falsehood, for I can see and read your heart; for I can judge you, and shall punish you."

"Master," replied Balsamo, "take care; your anger will do you an injury."

"Answer me! answer!"

"I can say to my master only what is true; I will see if I can procure what you desire, without injuring ourselves. I will endeavor to find a man who will sell you what you want; but I will not take the crime upon myself. That is all I can say."

"That is very delicate," said Althotas, with a bitter smile.

"It is so, Master," said Balsamo.

Althotas made so violent an effort that with the help of his two arms resting on the arms of the chair, he raised himself to his feet. "Yes, or no?" said he.

"Master, yes, if I find it; no, if I do not."

"Then you will expose me to death, wretch! you will save three drops of the blood of an insignificant, worthless creature such as I require, and let a perfect creature such as I am fall into the eternal gulf! Listen, Acharat!" said the old man, with a smile fearful to behold, "I no longer ask you for anything; I ask absolutely nothing; I will wait. But if you do not obey, I will serve myself; if you desert me, I will help myself! You have heard me, have you not? Now go!"

Balsamo, without replying to this threat, prepared everything the old man might want. He placed the drinks and the food within his reach, and performed all the services a watchful servant would perform for his master, a devoted son for his father; then, absorbed by a thought very different from that which tormented Althotas, he lowered the trap to descend, without remarking that the old man followed him with a sardonic and ominous grin.

Althotas was still grinning like an evil genius when Balsamo stood before the still sleeping Lorenza.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE STRUGGLE.

BALSAMO stood before Lorenza, his heart swelling with sad emotion; his wrath had given place to sorrow. His interview with Althotas had led him to reflect on the vanity of all human affairs, and had driven anger from his heart. He remembered the practice of the Greek philosopher who repeated the entire alphabet before listening to the voice of that black divinity, the counsellor of Achilles. After a moment of mute and cold contemplation before the couch on which Lorenza was lying, "I am sad," said he to himself, "but resolved, and I can look my situation fair in the face. Lorenza hates me; Lorenza has threatened to betray me, and has betrayed me. My secret is no longer my own; I have given it into this woman's power, and she casts it to the winds. I am like the fox who has withdrawn from the steel trap only the bone of his leg, but who has left behind his flesh and his skin, so that the huntsman can say on the morrow, 'The fox has been taken here; I shall know him again, living or dead.'

"And this dreadful misfortune, which Althotas cannot comprehend, and which therefore I have not even mentioned to him, — this misfortune, which destroys all my hopes in this country, and consequently in this world, of which France is the soul, I owe to the creature sleeping before me, to this beautiful statue with her entrancing

smile. To this tempting angel I owe dishonor and ruin, and shall owe to her, captivity, exile, and death.

"Therefore," continued he, becoming more animated, "the sum of evil has exceeded that of good, and Lorenza is dangerous to me. Oh, serpent! with thy graceful folds, which nevertheless strangle, with thy golden throat, which is nevertheless full of venom, sleep on; for when thou awakest I shall be obliged to kill thee!"

And with a gloomy smile Balsamo slowly approached the young woman, whose languid eyes were turned toward him as he approached, as the sunflower and volubilis open to the first rays of the rising sun.

"Oh!" said Balsamo, "and yet I must forever close those eyes which now beam so tenderly on me, — those beautiful eyes which are filled with lightning as soon as they cease to glow with love."

Lorenza smiled sweetly, and, smiling, she displayed the double row of her pearly teeth.

"But if I kill her who hates me," said Balsamo, wringing his hands, "I shall also kill her who loves me;" and his heart was filled with the deepest grief, strangely mingled with a vague desire. "No, no!" he murmured. "I have sworn in vain; I have threatened in vain, — no, I shall never have the courage to kill her! She shall live, but she shall live without ever being awakened again! She shall live this factitious life, which is happiness for her, while the other is despair. Would that I could make her happy! What matters to me the rest? She shall have but one existence, that which I create, that in which she loves me, that in which she lives at this moment;" and he returned Lorenza's tender look by a look as tender as her own, placing his hand as he did so gently on her head.

Lorenza, who seemed to read Balsamo's thoughts as if they were an open book, gave a long sigh, rose gradually

with the graceful languor of sleep, and placed her two white arms upon Balsamo's shoulders, who felt her perfumed breath upon his cheek.

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Balsamo, passing his hand over his burning forehead and his dazzled eyes; "no, this intoxicating life will make me mad, and with this siren, glory, power, immortality, will all vanish from my thoughts. No, no, she must awake! I wish it; it is necessary."

Distracted, beside himself, Balsamo suddenly shook off Lorenza, who loosened her hold upon him, and, like a floating veil, like a shadow, like a flake of snow, she fell on the sofa. The most finished coquette would not have chosen an attitude more seductive in which to present herself to her lover's view. Balsamo still had the strength to take a few steps in retreat; but, like Orpheus, he looked back, — like Orpheus, he was lost. "Oh, if I awake her," he thought, "the struggle will begin again! If I awake her, she will kill herself, or she will kill me, or force me to destroy her. Oh, what an abyss! Yes, this woman's destiny is written; it stands before me in letters of fire, — love, death! Lorenza, Lorenza! thou art doomed to love and to die! Lorenza, Lorenza! I hold thy life and thy love in my hands!"

Instead of a reply, the enchantress rose, advanced toward Balsamo, fell at his feet, and gazed into his eyes with a tender smile. Then she took one of his hands and placed it on her heart. "Death!" said she, in a low voice, with lips moist and brilliant as coral when it issues from the caverns of the deep; "death, but love!"

Balsamo took two steps backward, his head thrown back, his hand over his eyes. Lorenza, breathless, followed him on her knees. "Death!" she repeated, with her intoxicating voice, "but love, love, love!"

Balsamo could resist no longer; a cloud of flame enveloped him. "Oh!" he said, "it is too much; I have struggled as long as a human being could struggle. Demon, or angel of futurity, whichever thou art, thou must be content. I have long enough sacrificed all the generous passions in my heart to egotism and pride. Oh, no, no! I have no right thus to rebel against the only human sentiment which lives in my heart. I love this woman; I love her, and this passionate love injures her more than the most terrible hatred could do. This love kills her. Oh, coward! oh, ferocious fool that I am! I cannot even compromise with my desires. What! when I breathe my last sigh, when I appear before God, — I, the deceiver, the false prophet, — when I throw off my mantle of hypocrisy before the Sovereign Judge, shall I not have one generous action to confess, the recollection of a single happiness to console me in the midst of my eternal sufferings? Oh, no, no, Lorenza! I know that in loving thee I lose the future; I know that my revealing angel will wing its flight to heaven when once the woman shall descend into my arms. But, Lorenza, you wish it, do you not?"

"My beloved!" she sighed.

"Then you accept this life instead of the real life?"

"I ask for it on my knees, — I pray for it, I implore it. This life is love and happiness."

"And will it suffice for you when you are my wife? For you know that I love you passionately."

"Oh! I know it, — I can read your heart."

"And you will never accuse me, before men or before God, of having taken you by surprise, or of having deceived you?"

"Never! Oh! before men, before God, on the contrary, I will bless you for giving me love, — the only good, the only pearl, the only diamond in the world!"

"You will never regret your wings, poor dove? For you must know that you will never again roam through radiant space for me to seek the ray of light Jehovah once deigned to bestow upon his prophets. When I would know the future, when I would command men, alas! alas! your voice will no longer reply to me. I have had in you the beloved woman and the helping spirit; I shall have only one of the two now; and yet —"

"Ah! you doubt, you doubt," cried Lorenza; "I see doubt like a dark stain upon your heart."

"You will always love me, Lorenza?"

"Always! always!"

Balsamo passed his hand over his forehead.

"Well! so be it," said he. "Besides —" He remained a moment buried in thought. "Besides, am I in absolute need of her?" he continued. "Is she the only one in the world? No, no; while this one will make me happy, the other will continue my riches and my power. Andrée is as prophetic, as clairvoyant as you are. Andrée is young, pure, virginal, and I do not love her; and yet in her sleep Andrée is obedient to me, like you. I have in Andrée a subject ready to replace you; and to me she is the physician's *corpus vile* which may serve for experiments. She flies as far as you do — farther, perhaps — into the shadows of the unknown. Andrée, Andrée! I take you for my kingdom. Lorenza, come to my arms; I keep you for my love and my mistress. With Andrée I am powerful; with Lorenza I am happy. From this moment, only, my life is complete, and, except for immortality, I have realized the dream of Althotas, — except for immortality, I am equal to the gods!" and raising Lorenza, he opened his panting bosom, to which she clung as the ivy clings to the oak.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LOVE.

For Balsamo another life had begun, — a life hitherto unknown in his active, troubled, multifarious experience. For three days there had been for him no more anger, no more apprehension, no more jealousy; for three days he had not heard the subject of politics, conspirators, or conspiracies as much as whispered. By Lorenza's side — and he had not left her for an instant — he had forgotten the whole world. This strange, wonderful love, which, as it were, soared above humanity, this intoxicating and mysterious love, this love of a shadow, — for he could not conceal from himself that with a word he could change his gentle bride into an implacable enemy, — this love snatched from hatred, thanks to an inexplicable caprice of nature or of science, plunged Balsamo into happiness which bordered on madness.

More than once during these three days, rousing himself from the opiate torpor of love, Balsamo looked at his ever-smiling, ever-ecstatic companion, — for thenceforth, in the existence he had created for her, she rested from her life of factitious ecstasy by a sleep equally factitious; and when he saw her calm, gentle, happy, when she called him by the most affectionate names, and dreamed aloud her mysterious love, he more than once asked himself if God were not angry with the modern Titan who had attempted to wrest from him his secrets; if he had not inspired Lorenza with the idea of deceiving him with a false-

hood in order to lull his vigilance, and when it was lulled, of escaping, to appear again as an avenging fury.

In such moments Balsamo doubted the truth of a science received by tradition from antiquity, but of which he had no evidence but examples. Immediately, however, that perpetual flame, that thirst for caresses, reassured him. "If Lorenza was feigning," he argued with himself, "if she intended to fly from me, she would seek opportunities for sending me away, she would invent excuses for occasional solitude; but far from that, her arms are always embracing me, her ardent look says to me, 'Do not go away;' her gentle voice ever whispers, 'Stay!'"

Then Balsamo's confidence in himself and in science returned. Why, indeed, should the magic secret to which alone he owned his power have become all at once, and without any transition, a chimera fit only to throw to the winds as a vanished recollection, as the smoke of an extinguished fire? Never with relation to him had Lorenza been more lucid, more clear-sighted. All the thoughts which sprang up in his mind, all the feelings which made his heart bound, were instantly reproduced in hers. It remained to be seen if this lucidity were not sympathy; if, beyond himself and the young girl, beyond the circle which their love had traced, and which their love illuminated with its light, the eyes of her soul, so clear-sighted before the fall of this new Eve, could yet pierce the surrounding darkness. Balsamo dared not make the decisive trial; he hoped still, and this hope was the resplendent crown of his happiness.

Sometimes Lorenza said to him, with gentle melancholy: "Acharat, you think of another than me, of a woman of the North, with fair hair and blue eyes. Acharat, Acharat, this woman always moves beside me in your thoughts!"

Balsamo looked tenderly at Lorenza. "You see that in me?" said he.

"Oh, yes! as clearly as I read the surface of a mirror."

"Then you know it is not love which makes me think of that woman," replied Balsamo. "Read in my heart, dear Lorenza!"

"No," she replied, bending her head; "no, I know it well. But yet your thoughts are divided between us two, as in the days when Lorenza Feliciani tormented you, — the naughty Lorenza, who sleeps, and whom you will not again awake."

"No, my love, no," exclaimed Balsamo; "I think only of you, — at least with the heart. Have I not forgotten all, neglected everything, — study, politics, work, — since our happiness?"

"And you are wrong," said Lorenza; "for I can help you in your work."

"How?"

"Yes; did you not formerly spend whole hours in your laboratory?"

"Certainly. But I renounce all these vain endeavors. They would be so many hours taken from my life; for during that time I should not see you."

"And why should I not be with you in your labors as in your love? Why should I not make you powerful as I make you happy?"

"Because my Lorenza, it is true, is beautiful, but she has not studied. God gives beauty and love, but study alone gives knowledge."

"The soul knows everything."

"Then you can really see with the eyes of your soul?"

"Yes."

"And you can guide me in the grand search after the philosopher's stone?"

"I think so."

"Come, then;" and Balsamo, encircling her waist with his arm, led her into his laboratory. The fire in the gigantic furnace, which no one had replenished for four days, was extinguished, and the crucibles had grown cold upon their chafing-dishes.

Lorenza looked around on all these strange instruments, the last combinations of expiring alchemy, without surprise. She seemed to know the purpose which each was intended to fulfil. "You are attempting to make gold?" said she, smiling.

"Yes."

"All these crucibles contain preparations in different stages of progress."

"All stopped, — all lost; but I do not regret it."

"You are right, for your gold would never be anything but colored mercury; you can render it solid, perhaps, but you cannot transform it."

"But gold can be made?"

"No."

"And yet Daniel of Transylvania sold the receipt for the transmutation of metals to Cosmo the First for twenty thousand ducats."

"Daniel of Transylvania deceived Cosmo the First."

"And yet the Saxon Payken, who was condemned to death by Charles the Second, ransomed his life by changing a leaden ingot into a golden one, from which forty ducats were coined, and gold enough was taken to make a medal, which was struck in honor of the clever alchemist."

"The clever alchemist was nothing but a clever juggler. He merely substituted the golden ingot for the leaden



BALSAMO AND LORENZA

one, — nothing more. Your surest way of making gold, Acharat, is to melt into ingots, as you do already, the riches which your slaves bring you from the four quarters of the world."

Balsamo remained pensive. "Then the transmutation of metals is impossible?" said he.

"Impossible."

"And the diamond, — is that, too, impossible?"

"Oh! the diamond is another matter," said Lorenza.

"The diamond can be made, then?"

"Yes; for to make the diamond, you have not to transmute one body into another, — to make the diamond is merely to attempt the simple modification of a known element."

"Then you know the element of which the diamond is formed?"

"To be sure; the diamond is pure carbon crystallized."

Balsamo was almost stunned. A dazzling, unexpected, unheard-of light flashed before his eyes; he covered them with both hands, as if the flame had blinded him.

"Oh! my God," said he, "my God, thou dost for me too much; some danger threatens me! What precious ring must I throw into the sea to appease thy jealousy? Enough, Lorenza, for to-day!"

"Am I not yours? Order, command me!"

"Yes, you are mine. Come, come!"

And he drew her out of the laboratory, crossed the chamber of furs, and without paying any attention to a light, creaking noise he heard overhead, he once more entered the barred room with Lorenza.

"So you are pleased with your Lorenza, my beloved Balsamo?"

"Oh!" he exclaimed.

"What did you fear, then? Speak, — tell me all."

Balsamo clasped his hands, and looked at Lorenza with an expression of such terror that a spectator ignorant of what was in his heart would have been totally at a loss to account for it.

"Oh!" he murmured, "and I was near killing this angel; I was near dying of despair before resolving the problem of being at once powerful and happy! I forgot that the limits of the possible always exceed the horizon traced by the existing state of science, and that the majority of truths which have become facts have always in their infancy been looked upon as dreams. I thought I knew everything, and I knew nothing!"

The young Italian smiled divinely.

"Lorenza, Lorenza!" continued Balsamo, "the mysterious design of the Creator is, then, accomplished, which makes woman to be born of the substance of the man, and which commands them to have only one heart in common! Eve is revived for me, — an Eve who will not have a thought that is not mine, and whose life hangs by the thread which I hold. It is too much, my God, for a creature to possess! I sink under the weight of thy gift!" and he fell upon his knees, embracing with adoration the gentle beauty, who smiled on him as none smile on earth.

"Oh, no!" he continued; "no, you shall never leave me more! I shall live in all safety under the protection of your clairvoyance, which can pierce into the future. You will assist me in those laborious researches which you alone, as you have said, can complete, and which one word from you will render easy and successful. You will show me, — since I cannot make gold, gold being a homogeneous substance, a primitive element, — you will show me in what corner of the world the Creator has concealed it; you will tell me where the rich treasures lie which have

been swallowed up in the vast depths of the ocean. With your eyes I shall see the pearl grow in the veined shell, and man's thoughts spring up under the thick layers of his flesh. With your ears I shall hear the dull sound of the worm beneath the ground, and the footsteps of my enemy as he approaches! I shall be great as God, and happier than God, my Lorenza; for God has not in heaven his equal and companion, — for God is almighty, but he is alone in his divine majesty, and does not share with any other divine being that almightiness which makes him God."

Lorenza still smiled upon him, and as she smiled she replied to his words by affectionate caresses. "And yet," she whispered, as if she could see each thought which whirled through his restless brain, "and yet you doubt still, Acharat, as you have said, if I can cross the circle of our love, — you doubt if I can see into the distance; but you console yourself by thinking that if I cannot see, she can."

"She! Who?"

"The fair-haired beauty. Shall I tell you her name?"

"Yes."

"Stay, — Andrée!"

"Ah, yes; you can read my thoughts! Yes, a last fear still troubles me. Can you still see through space, though material obstacles intervene?"

"Try me."

"Give me your hand, Lorenza."

The young girl passionately seized Balsamo's hand.

"Can you follow me?"

"Anywhere?"

"Come!" and Balsamo, leaving in thought the Rue Saint Claude, drew Lorenza's thoughts along with him.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"We are upon a hill," replied the young woman.

"Yes, you are right," said Balsamo, trembling with delight. "But what do you see?"

"Before me? — to the right, or to the left?"

"Before you."

"I see a long valley, with a wood on one side, a town on the other, and a river which separates them and loses itself in the horizon, after flowing under the walls of a large chateau."

"That is right, Lorenza. The forest is that of Vésinet; the town St. Germain; the chateau is the Château de Maisons. Let us enter the pavilion behind us. What do you see there?"

"Ah! in the first place, in the antechamber, a little negro, fantastically dressed, eating sugar-plums."

"Yes, Zamore. Proceed, proceed!"

"An empty salon, splendidly furnished; the spaces above the doors painted with goddesses and cupids."

"The salon is empty, you say?"

"Yes."

"Let us go still farther."

"Ah! we are in a splendid boudoir, lined with blue satin embroidered with flowers of natural colors."

"Is that empty also?"

"No; a woman is reclining upon a sofa."

"What woman? Do you not remember to have seen her before?"

"Yes; it is the Comtesse Dubarry."

"Right, Lorenza! I shall go frantic with delight! What does the woman do?"

"She is thinking of you, Balsamo."

"Of me?"

"Yes."

"Then you can read her thoughts?"

"Yes, for I repeat it, she is thinking of you."

"And what is she thinking?"

"You have made her a promise."

"Yes."

"You promised her that water of beauty which Venus, to revenge herself on Sappho, gave to Phaon."

"Yes, yes, you are right again! And what does she do while thinking?"

"She comes to a decision."

"What decision?"

"She reaches out her hand toward the bell; she rings; another young woman enters."

"Dark or light haired?"

"Dark."

"Tall or short?"

"Short."

"Her sister. Listen to what she says to her."

"She orders the horses to be harnessed to her carriage."

"To go whither?"

"To come here."

"Are you sure?"

"She is giving the order. Stay,—she is obeyed; I see the horses and the carriage. In two hours she will be here."

Balsamo fell upon his knees. "Oh!" he exclaimed, "if in two hours she should really be here, I shall have nothing left to ask of thee, my God, except to have mercy on my happiness."

"My poor friend! then you still feared?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And why did you fear? Love, which completes the material existence, increases also our mental powers. Love, like every generous emotion, brings us nearer to God, and all wisdom comes from God."

"Lorenza, Lorenza, you will drive me mad with joy!" said Balsamo, letting his head fall on Lorenza's knees.

Balsamo now waited for but one more proof to be completely happy.

This proof was the arrival of Madame Dubarry. The two hours of suspense were short. All measure of time had completely ceased for Balsamo. Suddenly the young woman started, and took Balsamo's hand. "You are doubting yet," said she, "and you wish to know where she is at this moment."

"Yes," said Balsamo, "you are right."

"Well," replied Lorenza, "she is thundering along the Boulevards at the full speed of her horses; she approaches; she turns into the Rue Saint Claude; she stops before the door and knocks."

The apartment in which they were, was so retired and so quiet that the noise of the iron knocker could not penetrate its recesses; but Balsamo, rising on one knee, was anxiously listening. At this moment two knocks struck by Fritz made him bound to his feet; for, as the reader will remember, two knocks were the signal of an important visit.

"Oh!" said he, "then it is true?"

"Go and convince yourself, Balsamo; but return quickly."

Balsamo advanced toward the fireplace.

"Let me accompany you," said Lorenza, "as far as the door of the staircase."

"Come!" and they both passed together into the chamber of furs.

"You will not leave this room?" asked Balsamo.

"No; I will await you here. Oh! do not fear; you know the Lorenza who loves you is not the Lorenza whom you fear. Besides—" She stopped, and smiled.

"What?" asked Balsamo.

"Can you not read in my soul as I read yours?"

"Alas! no."

"Besides, you can command me to sleep until you return. Command me to remain immovable upon this sofa, and I shall sleep, and be motionless."

"Well, my Lorenza, it shall be so. Sleep, and await my return here!"

Lorenza, already struggling with sleep, pressed her lips to Balsamo's in a last kiss, and fell back upon the sofa, murmuring: "You will return soon, my Balsamo, will you not?"

Balsamo waved his hand. Lorenza was already asleep; but so beautiful, so pure, with her long, flowing hair, the feverish glow upon her cheeks, her half-opened and swimming eyes, so little like a mortal, that Balsamo came back to her, took her hand, kissed her arms and her neck, but dared not kiss her lips.

Two knocks were heard a second time. The lady was becoming impatient, or Fritz feared that his master had not heard him. Balsamo hastened to the door. As he closed it behind him, he thought he heard a second creaking noise like the former one. He opened the door again, looked round, and saw nothing, — nothing but Lorenza lying down, and breathing quickly under the pressure of her love. He closed the door, and hastened toward the salon without uneasiness, without fear, without foreboding, — all heaven in his heart!

Balsamo was mistaken; it was not love alone which oppressed Lorenza's bosom and made her breathe so heavily. It was a kind of dream which seemed to belong to the lethargy in which she was plunged, — a lethargy which so nearly resembled death.

Lorenza dreamed, and in the hideous mirror of her

gloomy dreams she fancied she saw, through the darkness which began to close around her, the oaken ceiling open, and something like a large circular platform descend slowly, with a regular, slow, measured movement, accompanied by a disagreeable hissing noise. It seemed to her as if she breathed with difficulty, as if she were almost suffocated by the pressure of this moving circle. It seemed to her as if upon this moving trap something moved, — some misshapen being like Caliban in "The Tempest," — a monster with a human face, an old man whose eyes and arms alone were living, and who looked at her with his frightful eyes, and stretched his fleshless arms toward her. And she — she, poor child! — writhed in vain, without power to escape, without understanding the danger which threatened her, without consciouness of anything but the grasp of two living flesh-hooks seizing upon her white dress, lifting her from her sofa, and placing her upon the trap, which reascended slowly toward the ceiling with the grating noise of iron scraping against iron, and with a hideous, mocking laugh from the monster with the human face, who was raising her aloft without shock and without pain.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PHILTRE.

As Lorenza had foretold, it was Madame Dubarry who had just knocked at the gate. The beautiful countess had been ushered into the salon. While awaiting Balsamo's arrival, she was looking over that curious "Book of Death," engraved at Mayence, the plates of which, designed with marvellous skill, show death presiding over all the acts of man's life, — waiting for him at the door of the ball-room after he has pressed the hand of the woman he loves, dragging him to the bottom of the water in which he is bathing, or hiding in the barrel of the gun he carries to the chase.

Madame Dubarry was contemplating the plate which represents a beautiful woman daubing her face with rouge and looking at herself in the glass, when Balsamo opened the door and bowed to her, with the smile of happiness still beaming upon his face. "Excuse me, Madame," said he, "for having made you wait; but I had not well calculated the distance, or was ignorant of the speed of your horses. I thought you still at the Place Louis XV."

"What do you mean?" asked the countess. "You knew I was coming, then?"

"Yes, Madame; it is about two hours ago that I saw you, in your blue satin boudoir, giving orders for your horses to be put to the carriage."

"And you say I was in my blue satin boudoir?"

"Embroidered with flowers colored after nature. Yes. Countess, you were reclining upon a sofa; a pleasing thought passed through your mind. You said to yourself, 'I will go and visit the Comte de Fenix;' then you rang the bell."

"And who entered?"

"Your sister, Countess. Am I right? You requested her to transmit your orders, which were instantly executed."

"Truly, Count, you are a sorcerer! Can you look into my boudoir like that every moment of the day? If so, you should have warned me, do you see?"

"Ah! be assured, Countess, I can look only through open doors."

"And looking through open doors, you saw that I was thinking of you?"

"Yes; and even that, you thought of me with benevolent intentions."

"Ah, you are right, my dear Count! I have the best possible intentions toward you; but confess that you deserve more than intentions, — you who are so kind and so useful, and who seem destined to play in my life the part of tutor, which is the most difficult part, I know."

"In truth, Madame, you make me very happy! Then I have been of use to you?"

"What! you are a sorcerer, and you do not know?"

"Allow me at least the merit of being modest."

"As you please, my dear Count; then I will first speak of what I have done for you."

"I cannot permit it, Madame; on the contrary, speak of yourself, I beseech you!"

"Well, my dear Count, in the first place, give me that talisman which renders one invisible; for on my journey hither, rapid as it was, I thought I recognized one of Monsieur de Richelieu's grays."

"And this gray?"

"Followed my carriage, carrying on his back a courier."

"What do you think of this circumstance, and for what purpose could the duke have caused you to be followed?"

"With the intention of playing me some scurvy trick. Modest as you are, my dear Comte de Fenix, you must be aware that Nature has gifted you with personal advantages enough to make a king jealous of my visits to you, or of yours to me."

"Monsieur de Richelieu cannot be dangerous to you in any way, Madame," replied Balsamo.

"But he was so, my dear Count; he was dangerous before this last event."

Balsamo comprehended that there was a secret concealed beneath these words which Lorenza had not yet revealed to him. He did not therefore venture on the unknown ground, and replied merely by a smile.

"He was indeed," repeated the countess; "and I was near falling a victim to a most skilfully constructed plot, — a plot in which you also had some share, Count."

"I, engaged in a plot against you? Never, Madame!"

"Was it not you who gave the Duc de Richelieu the philtre?"

"What philtre?"

"A draught which causes the most ardent love."

"No, Madame; Monsieur de Richelieu composes those draughts himself, for he has long known the receipt. I merely gave him a simple narcotic."

"Ah! really?"

"Upon my honor!"

"And on what day did Monsieur de Richelieu ask for this narcotic? Remember the date, Count; it is of importance."

"Madame, it was last Saturday, — the day previous to that on which I had the honor of sending you, through Fritz, the note requesting you to meet me at the house of Monsieur de Sartines."

"The eve of that day!" exclaimed the countess. "The eve of the day on which the king was seen going to see little Taverney? Oh! now everything is explained."

"Then, if all is explained, you see I gave only the narcotic."

"Yes, it is the narcotic which saved us."

This time Balsamo waited; he was profoundly ignorant of the subject.

"I am delighted, Madame," he replied, "to have been useful to you, even unintentionally."

"Oh! you are always kindness itself. But you can do more for me than you have ever yet done. Oh, doctor! I have been very ill, politically speaking, and even now I can scarcely believe in my recovery."

"Madame," said Balsamo, "the doctor, since there is a doctor in the case, always requires the details of the illness he is to cure. Will you give me the exact particulars of what you have experienced? — and if possible, do not forget a single symptom."

"Nothing can be more simple, my dear doctor, or dear sorcerer, whichever you prefer. The eve of the day on which this narcotic was used, his Majesty refused to accompany me to Luciennes. He remained, like a deceiver as he is, at Trianon, pretending fatigue; and yet, as I have since learned, he supped at Trianon with the Duc de Richelieu and the Baron de Taverney."

"Ha!"

"Now you understand. At supper the love-draught was given to the king. He was already captivated by Mademoiselle Andrée; it was known that he would not see me

the next day; it was therefore with reference to that young lady that the philtre was to operate."

"Well, what happened?"

"Oh! that is difficult to discover positively. The king was seen going in the direction of the offices of Trianon, — that is to say, toward Mademoiselle Andrée's apartment."

"I know where she lives; but what followed?"

"Ah! 'What followed?' *Peste*, how fast you are, Count. The king cannot be followed without risk when he wishes to conceal himself."

"But, in short?"

"In short, all I can tell you is that his Majesty returned to Trianon through a fearful storm, pale, trembling, and feverish, — almost on the verge of delirium."

"And you think," said Balsamo, smiling, "that it was not the storm alone which alarmed his Majesty?"

"No, for the valet heard him cry several times, 'Dead, dead, dead!'"

"Oh!" said Balsamo.

"It was the narcotic," continued Madame Dubarry. "Nothing alarms the king so much as death, and next to death its semblance. He had found Mademoiselle de Taverney sleeping a strange sleep, and must have thought her dead."

"Yes, yes; dead indeed," said Balsamo, who remembered having fled without awakening Andrée, — "dead, or at least presenting all the appearance of death. Yes, yes, — it must be so. Well, Madame, and what then?"

"No one knows, then, what happened that night, or rather, in the first part of the night. The king, on his return, was attacked by a violent fever and a nervous trembling, which did not leave him until the morning, when it occurred to the dauphiness to open the shutters and show his Majesty a lovely morning, with the sun

shining upon merry faces. Then all these unknown visions disappeared with the night which had produced them. At noon the king was better, took some broth, and ate a partridge's wing; and in the evening —"

"And in the evening —?" repeated Balsamo.

"In the evening," continued Madame Dubarry, "his Majesty, who no doubt would not stay at Trianon after his fright, came to see me at Luciennes, where, dear Count, I discovered, upon my word, that Monsieur de Richelieu was almost as great a sorcerer as you are."

The triumphant countenance and graceful but roguish look of the countess reassured Balsamo as to the power the favorite yet exercised over the king. "Then you are satisfied with me, Madame?" he asked.

"Delighted, Count! and when you spoke of impossibilities you could create, you told the exact truth;" and in token of thanks she gave him her soft, white, perfumed hand, which was not so fresh as Lorenza's, but whose warmth had also its own eloquence.

"And now, Count, let us speak of yourself."

Balsamo bowed like a man ready to listen.

"If you have preserved me from a great danger," continued Madame Dubarry, "I think I have also saved you from no inconsiderable peril."

"Me!" said Balsamo, concealing his emotion. "I do not require that to feel grateful to you; but yet, be good enough to inform me what —"

"Yes. The coffer in question —"

"Well, Madame?"

"Contained a multitude of ciphers, which Monsieur de Sartines caused all his clerks to translate. All signed their several translations, executed apart, and all gave the same result. In consequence of this, Monsieur de Sartines arrived at Versailles this morning while I was there, bring-

ing with him all these translations and the dictionary of diplomatic ciphers."

"Ha! — and what did the king say?"

"The king seemed surprised at first, then alarmed. His Majesty easily listens to those who speak to him of danger. Since the stab of Damiens' penknife, there is one word which is ever eagerly hearkened to by Louis XV., — it is, 'Take care!'"

"Then you say that Monsieur de Sartines accused me of plotting?"

"At first Monsieur de Sartines endeavored to make me leave the room; but I refused, declaring that as no one was more attached to his Majesty than myself, no one had a right to make me leave him when danger was in question. Monsieur de Sartines insisted, but I resisted; and the king, smiling and looking at me in a manner I know well, said, 'Let her remain, Sartines; I can refuse her nothing to-day.'

"Then you understand, Count, that as I was present, Monsieur de Sartines, remembering our adieu, so clearly expressed, feared to displease me by attacking you. He therefore spoke of the evil designs of the King of Prussia toward France; of the disposition prevalent to facilitate the march of rebellion by supernatural means. In a word, he accused a great many people, proving always by the papers he held that these persons were guilty."

"Guilty of what?"

"Of what! Count, ought I to disclose secrets of State?"

"Which are our secrets, Madame. Oh, you risk nothing! I think it is my interest not to speak."

"Yes, Count, I know that Monsieur de Sartines wished to prove that a numerous and powerful sect, composed of bold, skilful, resolute agents, were silently undermining

the respect due to the king, by spreading certain reports concerning his Majesty."

"What reports?"

"Saying, for instance, that his Majesty was accused of starving his people."

"To which the king replied — "

"As the king always replies, by a joke."

Balsamo breathed again.

"And what was the joke?" he asked.

"'Since I am accused of starving the people,' said he, 'there is only one reply to make to the accusation, — let us feed them.' 'How so, Sire?' said Monsieur de Sartines. 'I will take the charge of feeding all those who spread this report, and moreover will give them safe lodging in my chateau of the Bastille.'"

A slight shudder passed through Balsamo's limbs, but he retained his smiling countenance. "What followed?" he asked.

"Then the king seemed to consult me by a smile. 'Sire,' said I, 'I can never believe that those little black characters which Monsieur de Sartines has brought to you mean that you are a bad king.' Then the lieutenant of police exclaimed loudly. 'Any more,' I added, 'than they prove that your clerks can read.'"

"And what did the king say, Countess?" asked Balsamo.

"That I might be right, but that Monsieur de Sartines was not wrong."

"Well, and then?"

"Then a great many *lettres-de-cachet* were made out, and I saw that Monsieur de Sartines tried to slip among them one for you; but I stood firm, and arrested him by a single word. 'Monsieur,' I said aloud, and before the king, 'arrest all Paris, if you like, — that is your business;

but you had better reflect a little before you lay a finger on one of my friends. If not —' 'Oh, ho!' said the king, 'she is getting angry; take care, Sartines!' 'But, Sire, the interest of the kingdom —' 'Oh, you are not a Sully!' said I, crimson with rage; 'and I am not a Gabrielle.' 'Madame, they intend to assassinate the king, as Henri IV. was assassinated!' For the first time the king turned pale, trembled, and put his hand to his head. I feared I was vanquished. 'Sire,' said I, 'you must let Monsieur de Sartines have his own way; for his clerks have no doubt read in these ciphers that I also am conspiring against you;' and I left the room. But, bless me, it was the morning after the philtre, my dear Count! The king preferred my company to that of Monsieur de Sartines, and ran after me. 'Ah, for pity's sake, my dear Countess,' said he, 'pray do not get angry!' 'Then send away that horrid man, Sire; he smells of dungeons.' 'Go, Sartines; off with you!' said the king, shrugging his shoulders. 'And for the future I forbid you, not only to visit me, but even to bow to me,' added I. At this blow our magistrate became alarmed; he approached me, and humbly kissed my hand. 'Well,' said he, 'so be it; let us speak no more of it, fair lady. But you will ruin the State. Since you absolutely insist upon it, your protégé shall be respected by my agents.'"

Balsamo seemed plunged in a deep revery.

"Well," said the countess, "so you do not even thank me for having saved you from the pleasure of lodging in the Bastille, which perhaps might have been unjust, but assuredly no less disagreeable on that account?"

Balsamo made no reply. He drew a small phial, filled with a fluid red as blood, from his pocket. "Hold, Madame!" said he; "for the liberty you have procured for me, I give you twenty years' additional youth!"

The countess slipped the phial into her bosom, and took her leave joyous and triumphant. Balsamo still remained thinking. "They might perhaps have been saved," said he, "but for the coquetry of a woman. This courtesan's little foot dashes them down into the depths of the abyss. Decidedly, God is with us!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

BLOOD.

THE door had no sooner closed upon Madame Dubarry than Balsamo ascended the secret staircase and entered the chamber of furs. The conversation with the countess had been long, and for two reasons he was impatient. The first was the desire to see Lorenza; the second, the fear that she might be fatigued, for in the new life he had given her there was no room for *ennui*. She might be fatigued, inasmuch as she might pass, as she sometimes did, from the magnetic sleep to ecstasy; and to this ecstatic state always succeeded those nervous crises which prostrated Lorenza's strength, if a new supply of the regenerating fluid did not restore the necessary equilibrium among the various functions of her organization.

Balsamo, then, having entered and closed the door, immediately glanced at the couch where he had left Lorenza. She was no longer there. Only the fine shawl of cashmere embroidered with golden flowers, which had enveloped her like a scarf, was still lying upon the cushions, as an evidence that she had been in the room and had been reclining on them.

Balsamo stood motionless, gazing at the empty sofa. Perhaps Lorenza had felt herself incommoded by a strange odor which seemed to have filled the room since he left it; perhaps, by a mechanical movement, she had usurped some of the functions of actual life, and instinctively changed her place.

Balsamo's first idea was that Lorenza had returned to the laboratory, whither she had accompanied him a short time previously. He entered the laboratory. At the first glance it seemed empty; but in the shadow of the gigantic furnace, or behind the Oriental tapestry, a woman could easily conceal herself. He raised the tapestry, therefore; he made the circuit of the furnace; nowhere could he discover even a trace of Lorenza. There remained only the young girl's chamber, to which she had, no doubt, returned; for this chamber was a prison to her only in her waking state. He hastened to the chamber, and found the secret door closed. This was no proof that Lorenza had not entered. Nothing was more probable, in fact, than that Lorenza, in her lucid sleep, had remembered the mechanism, and remembering it, had obeyed the hallucination of a dream barely effaced from her mind. Balsamo pressed the spring. The chamber was empty, like the laboratory; it did not appear as if Lorenza had even entered it.

Then a heart-rending thought — a thought which, it will be remembered, had already stung his heart — chased away all the suppositions, all the hopes of the happy lover. Lorenza had been playing a part; she must have feigned to sleep in order to banish all distrust, all uneasiness, all watchfulness from her husband's mind; and at the first opportunity had fled again, this time with surer precautions, warned as she had been by a first, or rather by two former experiences.

At this idea Balsamo started up and rang for Fritz. Then, as Fritz, to his impatient mind, seemed to delay, he hastened to meet him, and found him on the secret staircase. "The signora?" said he.

"Well, Master?" said Fritz, seeing by Balsamo's agitation that something extraordinary had taken place.

"Have you seen her?"

"No, Master."

"She has not gone?"

"From where?"

"From this house, to be sure!"

"No one has left the house but the countess, behind whom I have just closed the gate."

Balsamo rushed up the stairs again like a madman. Then he fancied that the giddy young creature, so different in her sleep from what she was when waking, had concealed herself in a moment of childish playfulness; that from the corner where she was hid she was now reading his heart, and amusing herself by terrifying him, in order to reassure him afterward. Then he began a minute search. Not a nook was omitted, not a closet forgotten, not a screen left in its proper place. There was something in this search of Balsamo's like the frantic efforts of a man blinded by passion, alternating with the feeble and tottering gait of a drunkard. He could then only stretch out his arms and cry, "Lorenza, Lorenza!" hoping that the adored creature would rush forth suddenly, and throw herself into his arms with an exclamation of joy. But silence alone, a gloomy and uninterrupted silence, replied to his extravagant thoughts and mad appeals.

In running wildly about, dashing aside the furniture, shouting to the naked walls, calling Lorenza, staring without seeing any object or forming a single coherent thought, Balsamo passed three minutes — that is to say, three centuries — of agony.

He recovered by degrees from this half-insane hallucination, dipped his hand in a vase of iced water, moistened his temples, and pressing one hand in the other, as if to force himself to be cool, he chased back by his iron will the blood which was beating wildly against his brain, with

that fatal, incessant, monotonous movement which indicates life when there is merely motion and silence, but which is a sign of death or madness when it becomes tumultuous and perceptible.

"Come!" said he, "let me reason. Lorenza is not here, — no more false pretences with myself. Lorenza is not here; she must be gone, — yes, gone, quite gone!" And he looked around once more, and once more shouted her name. "Gone!" he continued. "In vain Fritz asserts that he has not seen her. She is gone, — gone! Two cases present themselves: Either he has not seen Lorenza, — and, after all, that is possible, for man is liable to error, — or he has seen her, and has been bribed by her. Fritz bribed! Why not? In vain does his past fidelity plead against this supposition. If Lorenza, if love, if science, could so deeply deceive and lie, why should the frail nature of a fallible human being not deceive also? Oh, I will know all! I will know all! Is there not Mademoiselle de Taverney left? Yes, through Andrée I shall know if Fritz has betrayed me, if Lorenza is false! And this time, — oh! this time as love has proved false, as science has proved an error, as fidelity has become a snare, — oh! this time Balsamo will punish without pity, without sparing, like a strong man who revenges himself, who chases pity from his heart, and keeps only pride. Let me see; the first step is to leave this as quickly as possible, not to let Fritz suspect anything, and to fly to Trianon."

Balsamo, seizing his hat, which had rolled on the floor, rushed toward the door. But suddenly he stopped. "Oh!" said he, "before anything else — my God! poor old man, I had forgotten him — I must see Althotas. During my delirium, during this spasm of forced and unnatural love, I have neglected the unfortunate old man; I have been ungrateful and inhuman!"

And, with the feverishness which now animated all his movements, Balsamo approached the spring which put in motion the trap in the ceiling, and the movable scaffold quickly descended. He placed himself upon it, and, aided by the counterpoise, mounted again, still overwhelmed by the anguish of his mind and heart, and without thinking of anything but Lorenza. Scarcely had he attained the level of the floor, when the voice of Althotas struck upon his ear, and roused him from his gloomy revery.

But, to Balsamo's great astonishment, the old man's first words were not reproaches, as he had expected; he was received with an outburst of simple and natural gayety. The pupil looked with an astonished gaze upon his master.

The old man was reclining upon his spring-chair. He breathed noisily and with delight, as if at each inspiration he added a day to his life; his eyes, full of a gloomy fire, but the expression of which was enlivened by the smile upon his lips, were fixed eagerly upon his visitor.

Balsamo summoned up all his strength and collected his ideas, in order to conceal his grief from his master, who had so little indulgence for human weaknesses. During this moment of reflection he felt a strange oppression weigh upon his breast. No doubt the air was vitiated by being too constantly breathed, for a heavy, dull, close, nauseous odor, like the one he had already noticed below, but there in a slighter degree, floated in the air, and like the vapors which rise from lakes and marshes in autumn at sunrise and sunset, had taken substance and rested on the windows.

In this dense and acrid atmosphere Balsamo's heart throbbed, his head felt confused, a vertigo seized upon him, and he felt that respiration and strength were fast

failing him. "Master," said he, seeking some object on which to support himself, and endeavoring to dilate his lungs, — "Master, you cannot live here; there is no air."

"You think so?"

"Oh!"

"Nevertheless, I breathe very well in it," replied Althotas, gayly, "and I live as you see!"

"Master, Master!" replied Balsamo, growing more and more giddy, "let me open a window! It rises from the floor like an exhalation of blood!"

"Of blood! Ah! you think so? Of blood?" cried Althotas, bursting into a laugh.

"Oh, yes, yes; I feel the miasma which is exhaled from a newly killed body. I could weigh it, so heavily does it press upon my brain and heart."

"That is it;" said Althotas, with his sardonic laugh, — "that is it; I also perceived it. You have a tender heart and a weak brain, Acharat."

"Master," said Balsamo, pointing with his finger at the old man, — "Master, you have blood upon your hands; Master, there is blood upon this table; there is blood everywhere, even in your eyes, which shine like two torches; Master, the smell which I breathe, and which makes me giddy, which is suffocating me, is the smell of blood!"

"Well, what then?" said Althotas, quickly; "is this the first time in your life that you have smelt it?"

"No."

"Have you never seen me make experiments? Have you never made any yourself?"

"But human blood!" said Balsamo, pressing his hand upon his burning forehead.

"Ah! you have a subtle sense of smell," said Althotas.

"Well, I did not think human blood could be distinguished from that of any other animal."

"Human blood!" muttered Balsamo. And as he reeled backward and felt for some projecting point to support him, he perceived with horror a vast copper basin, the shining sides of which reflected the purple color of the freshly spilled blood. The enormous vase was half-filled.

Balsamo started back, terrified. "Oh, this blood!" he exclaimed; "whence comes this blood?"

Althotas made no reply, but his watchful eyes lost nothing of Balsamo's suspicion, bewilderment, and terror. Suddenly the latter uttered a terrible roar. Then, stooping like some wild beast darting upon its prey, he rushed to a corner of the room and picked up from the floor a silken ribbon embroidered with silver, to which was hanging a long tress of black hair.

After that wild, mournful, terrible cry, a deathlike silence reigned for a moment in the old man's apartment. Balsamo slowly raised the ribbon, shuddered as he examined the tresses which a golden pin fastened to the silk at one end, while, cut off sharply at the other, they seemed like a fringe the end of which had been dipped in a wave of blood, the red and sparkling drops of which were still apparent on the edge.

In proportion as Balsamo raised his hand, it trembled still more. As he looked more intently at the ribbon, his cheeks became more livid. "Whence does this come?" murmured he, in a hollow voice, loud enough, however, for another to hear and to reply to his question.

"That?" asked Althotas.

"Yes, that."

"Well! it is a silken ribbon tying some hair."

"But the hair, — in what is it steeped?"

"You can see, — in blood."

"In what blood?"

"*Parbleu!* in the blood I wanted for my elixir, — in the blood which you refused me, and which, therefore, I was forced to procure for myself."

"But this hair, these tresses, this ribbon, — from whom did you take them? This is not a child's hair."

"And who told you it was a child I had killed?" asked Althotas, quietly.

"Did you not want the blood of a child for your elixir?" said Balsamo. "Did you not tell me so?"

"Or of a virgin, Acharat, — or of a virgin." And Althotas stretched his long, bony hand from the chair, and took a phial, the contents of which he tasted with delight. Then, in his most natural tone and with his most affectionate smile, "I have to thank you, Acharat," said he; "you were wise and far-sighted in placing that woman beneath my trap, almost within reach of my hand. Humanity has no cause for complaint. The law has nothing to lay hold upon. He, he! — it was not you who gave me the young creature without whom I should have perished. No! I took her. He, he! — thanks, my dear pupil! thanks, my dear Acharat!" And he once more put the phial to his lips.

Balsamo let fall the tress of hair which he held; a horrible light dazzled his eyes. Opposite to him was the old man's table, — a large marble slab always heaped with plants, books, and phials. This table was covered with a long cloth of white damask with dark flowers, on which the lamp of Althotas shed a reddish light, and which displayed an ominous outline which Balsamo had not before remarked. He seized a corner of the cloth and hastily pulled it away. But instantly his hair stood on end; his gaping mouth could not utter the horrible cry which almost suffocated him.

Under this shroud Balsamo had perceived Lorenza's corpse stretched upon the table, her face livid and yet smiling, and her head hanging backward as if dragged down by the weight of her long hair.

A large wound gaped underneath the collar-bone, from which not a single drop of blood escaped. Her hands were rigid, and her eyes closed beneath their purple eyelids.

"Yes, blood! the last three drops of a virgin's blood, — that is what I wanted," said the old man, putting the phial to his lips for the third time.

"Wretch!" thundered Balsamo, whose cry of despair at last burst from each pore, "die, then, for in the last four days she has been my mistress, my love, my wife! You have murdered her in vain! She was not a virgin."

The eyes of Althotas quivered at these words as if an electric shock had made them dance in their orbits; his pupils were fearfully dilated, his toothless gums chattered, the phial fell from his hand upon the floor and broke into a thousand pieces, while he, stupefied, annihilated, stricken at once in heart and brain, fell back heavily upon his chair.

Balsamo bent with a sob over Lorenza's body, and pressing his lips to her blood-stained hair, sank senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DESPAIR.

The Hours, those mysterious sisters, who cleave the air hand-in-hand with a flight so slow for the wretched, so rapid for the happy, paused in their onward motion, folding their heavy wings over this chamber filled with sighs and groans. Death on one side, agony on the other, and between them despair, — grievous as agony, deep as death.

Balsamo had not uttered a word since the terrible cry which had been wrung from his breast. Since the terrible revelation which had cast down the ferocious joy of Althotas, he had not moved.

As for the hideous old man, thus violently thrown back into life such as God grants to man, he seemed as much bewildered in this new element as the bird struck by a leaden bullet and fallen from the skies into a lake, on whose surface it flutters, unable to employ its wings. The horror expressed in his pale and agonized features revealed the immeasurable extent of his disappointment.

In fact, Althotas no longer even took the trouble to think, since he had seen the goal at which his spirit aimed, and which he had thought firm as a rock, vanish like empty vapor. His deep and silent despair seemed almost like insensibility. To a mind unaccustomed to measure his, it might have seemed an indication of reflection; to Balsamo, who however did not even look upon him, it marked the death-agony of power, of reason, and of life.

Althotas fixed his gaze upon the broken phial, — the image of the nothingness of his hopes. One would have said he counted the thousand scattered fragments, which, in falling, had diminished his life by so many days. One would have said he wished to drink in with his look the precious fluid which was spilled upon the floor, and which for a moment he had believed to be immortality.

At times, also, when the grief of this disenchantment was too poignant, the old man raised his dull eyes to Balsamo, then from Balsamo his glance wandered to Lorenza's corpse. He resembled at these moments those savage animals which the huntsman finds in the morning caught in the trap by the leg, and which he stirs for a long time with his foot without making them turn their heads, but which, when he pricks them with his hunting-knife, or with the bayonet of his fowling-piece, obliquely raise their bloodshot eyes, throwing on him a look of hatred, vengeance, reproach, and surprise.

"Is it possible," said this look, so expressive even in its atony, — "is it credible, that so many misfortunes, so many shocks, should overwhelm me, caused by such an insignificant being as the man I see kneeling there a few yards from me, at the feet of such a vulgar object as that dead woman? Is it not a reversion of Nature, an overturning of science, a cataclysm of reason, that the pupil so gross should have deceived the master so sublime? Is it not monstrous that the grain of sand should have arrested the wheel of the superb chariot, so rapid in its all-powerful, its immortal flight?"

As for Balsamo, stunned, heart-broken, without voice or motion, almost without life, no human thought had yet dawned amid the dark vapors of his brain.

Lorenza, his Lorenza! His wife, his idol, doubly precious to him as his revealing angel and his love, — Lorenza,

his delight and his glory, the present and the future, his strength and faith; Lorenza, all he loved, all he wished for, all he looked forward to in this world, — Lorenza was lost to him forever!

He did not weep, he did not groan, he did not even sigh. He hardly had time as yet for astonishment that so frightful a calamity had fallen upon him. He was like those unfortunates whom an inundation seizes in their bed, in the midst of darkness. They dream that the water gains upon them; they awake, they open their eyes and see a roaring billow breaking over their heads, and have not even time to utter a cry in their passage from life to death.

For a long time Balsamo felt himself buried in the deepest abyss of the tomb. In his overwhelming grief, he looked upon what had happened to him as one of the dark dreams which torment the dead in the eternal silent night of the sepulchre. For him there was no more Althotas, — that is to say, no more hate, no more revenge. For him there was no more Lorenza, — that is to say, no more life, no more love. All was sleep, night, nothingness! Thus the minutes glided past, gloomily, silently, heavily, in this chamber where the blood congealed and the lifeless form grew rigid.

Suddenly, amid the death-like silence, a bell sounded three times. Fritz, doubtless, was aware that his master was with Althotas, for the bell sounded in the room itself. But in vain it sounded three time, with an insolently strange noise; the sound died away in space. Balsamo did not raise his head.

In a few moments the same ringing, only louder this time, sounded again; but, like the first, it could not rouse Balsamo from his torpor. Then, at a measured interval, but not so far from the second as that had been from the

first, the angry bell a third time made the room resound with multiplied echoes of its wailing and impatient sounds.

Balsamo did not start, but slowly raised his head and interrogated the empty space before him with the cold solemnity of a corpse rising from the tomb. So must Lazarus have looked when the voice of Christ called him three times. The bell continued ringing. Its increasing energy aroused at last the intelligence of Lorenza's lover. He withdrew his hand from that of the corpse. All the heat had left his body, without passing into that of Lorenza.

"Some important news or some great danger," muttered Balsamo to himself. "May it prove a great danger!" And he rose to his feet. "But why should I reply to this summons?" he continued aloud, without heeding the gloomy sound of his words echoing beneath the sombre vault of this funereal chamber; "can anything in this world henceforth interest or alarm me?"

Then, as if in reply, the bell struck its iron tongue so rudely against its brazen sides that the clapper broke and fell upon a glass retort, which flew in pieces with a metallic sound, and scattered its fragments upon the floor. Balsamo resisted no longer; besides, it was important that none, not even Fritz, should come to seek him where he was. He walked, therefore, with steady step to the spring, pressed it, and placed himself upon the trap, which descended slowly and deposited him in the chamber of furs. As he passed the sofa, he brushed against the scarf which had fallen from Lorenza's shoulders when the pitiless old man, impassive as death itself, had carried her off in his arms.

This contact, more living seemingly than Lorenza herself, sent an icy shudder through Balsamo's veins. He took the scarf and kissed it, using it to stifle the cries

which burst from his heaving breast. Then he proceeded to open the door of the staircase.

On the topmost steps stood Fritz, all pale and breathless, holding a torch in one hand, and in the other the cord of the bell, which, in his terror and impatience, he continued to pull convulsively. On seeing his master, he uttered a cry of satisfaction, and then a cry of surprise and fear. But Balsamo, ignorant of the cause of this double cry, replied only by a mute interrogation.

Fritz did not speak, but he ventured — he, usually so respectful — to take his master's hand, and led him to the large Venetian mirror that ornamented the mantelpiece at the back of which was the passage into Lorenza's apartment. "Oh, look, your Excellency!" said he, showing him his own image in the glass.

Balsamo shuddered. Then a smile — one of those smiles which spring from infinite and incurable grief, a deathly smile — flitted over his lips. He had understood the cause of Fritz's alarm. Balsamo had grown twenty years older in an hour. There was no more brightness in his eyes, no more color in his cheek; an expression of dulness and stupefaction overspread his features; a bloody foam fringed his lips; a large spot of blood stained the whiteness of his cambric shirt.

Balsamo looked at himself in the glass for a moment without being able to recognize himself, then he determinedly fixed his eyes upon the strange person reflected in the mirror. "Yes, Fritz," said he, "you are right." Then, remarking the anxious look of his faithful servant, "But why did you call me?" he asked.

"Oh! Master, for *them*."

"For them?"

"Yes."

"Whom do you mean by *them*?"

"Excellency," whispered Fritz, putting his mouth close to his master's ear, "the Five Masters."

Balsamo shuddered. "All?" he asked.

"Yes, all."

"And they are here?"

"Here."

"Alone?"

"No; each has an armed servant waiting in the courtyard."

"They came together?"

"Yes, Master, together, and they are impatient; that is why I rang so many times and so violently."

Balsamo, without even concealing the spot of blood beneath the folds of his frill, without attempting to repair the disorder of his dress, began to descend the stairs, after having asked Fritz if his guests had installed themselves in the salon or in the great cabinet.

"In the salon, Excellency," replied Fritz, following his master. Then at the foot of the stairs, venturing to stop Balsamo, he asked: "Has your Excellency no orders to give me?"

"None, Fritz."

"Excellency —" stammered Fritz.

"Well?" asked Balsamo, with infinite gentleness.

"Will your Excellency go unarmed?"

"Unarmed? yes."

"Even without your sword?"

"And why should I take my sword, Fritz?"

"I do not know," said the faithful servant, casting down his eyes, "but I thought — I believed — I feared — "

"It is well, Fritz; you may go."

Fritz moved away a few steps in obedience to the order he had received, but returned.

"Did you not hear?" asked Balsamo.

"Excellency, I merely wished to tell you that your double-barrelled pistols are in the ebony case upon the gilt stand."

"Go, I tell you!" replied Balsamo. And he entered the salon.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE JUDGMENT.

Fritz was quite right; Balsamo's guests had not entered the Rue Saint Claude with a pacific display nor with a benevolent exterior. Five horsemen escorted the travelling carriage in which the Masters had come; five men with a haughty and sombre mien, armed to the teeth, had closed the outer gate and were guarding it while appearing to await their masters' return.

A coachman and two footmen on the carriage seat concealed under their overcoats each a small hanger and a musket. It was rather on an expedition than on a visit that so many persons had come to the Rue Saint Claude. And therefore the nocturnal invasion of these terrible men, whom Fritz had recognized, the forcible taking possession of the hôtel, had inspired the German with an unspeakable terror. He had at first attempted to refuse entrance to the whole party, when he had seen the escort through the wicket, and had suspected them to be armed; but the all-powerful signals they had used — that irresistible testimony of the right of the new-comers — had left him no option.

As soon as they were masters of the place, the strangers, like skilful generals, posted themselves at each outlet of the house, taking no pains to dissemble their hostile intentions. The pretended valets in the courtyard and in the passages, the pretended masters in the salon, seemed to Fritz to bode no good; and that was why he had broken the bell.

Balsamo, without displaying any astonishment, without making any preparation, entered the room, which Fritz, to do proper honor to all visitors, had lighted up as usual. He saw, seated in armchairs, the five visitors, of whom not one rose when he entered. He, as master of the house, having looked at them, bowed politely; then only did they rise and gravely return his salute.

Balsamo took a chair in front of them, without noticing or seeming to notice the strange order of their position. In fact, the five armchairs formed a semicircle like those of the ancient tribunals, with a president, supported by two assistants, and with Balsamo's chair placed in front of that of the president, and occupying the place accorded to the accused in a council or prætorium.

Balsamo did not speak first, as in other circumstances he would have done; he looked around without seeing any object clearly, — still affected by a kind of painful drowsiness, which had remained after the shock.

"It seems, Brother, that you have understood our errand," said the president, or rather he who occupied the centre seat; "yet you delayed to come, and we were already deliberating if we should send to seek you."

"I do not understand your errand," said Balsamo, calmly.

"I should not have imagined so, from seeing you take the position and attitude of an accused before us."

"An accused?" stammered Balsamo, vacantly, shrugging his shoulders. "I do not understand you."

"We will soon make you understand us. Not a difficult task, if I may believe your pale cheeks, your vacant eyes, and trembling voice. One would think you did not hear."

"Oh, yes; I hear," replied Balsamo, shaking his head, as if to banish the thoughts which oppressed it.

"Do you remember, Brother," continued the president,

"that in its last communication the superior committee warned you against a treasonable attempt meditated by one of the great ones of the order?"

"Perhaps so — yes — I do not deny it."

"You reply as a disordered and troubled conscience might be expected to do; but rouse yourself. Be not cast down; reply with that clearness and precision which your terrible position requires. Reply to my questions with the certainty that we are open to conviction, for we have neither prejudice nor hatred in this matter. We are the law; it does not pronounce a verdict until the evidence is heard."

Balsamo made no reply.

"I repeat it, Balsamo, and my warning once given, let it be to you like the warning which combatants give to each other before beginning their struggle. I will attack you with just but powerful weapons; defend yourself!"

The assistants, seeing Balsamo's indifference and imperturbable demeanor, looked at each other with astonishment, and then again turned their eyes upon the president.

"You have heard me, Balsamo, have you not?" repeated the latter.

Balsamo made a sign of the head in the affirmative.

"Like a well-meaning and loyal brother, I have warned you, and given you a hint of the aim of my questionings. You are warned, guard yourself; I am about to begin again."

"After this announcement," continued the president, "the association appointed five of its members to watch in Paris the proceedings of the man who was pointed out to us as a traitor. Now our revelations are not subject to error. We gather them, as you yourself know, either from devoted agents, from the aspect of events, or from infallible indications and signs among the mysterious combinations

which Nature has as yet revealed to us alone. Now one of us had a vision respecting you; we know that he has never been deceived, we were upon our guard, and watched you."

Balsamo listened without giving the least sign of impatience or even of intelligence. The president continued:

"It was not an easy task to watch a man such as you. You enter everywhere; your mission is to have a footing wherever our enemies have a residence or any power whatever. You have at your disposal all your natural resources — which are immense — and those which the association intrusts to you to make its cause triumphant. For a long time we hovered in a sea of doubt when we saw enemies visit you, such as a Richelieu, a Dubarry, a Rohan. Moreover, at the last assembly in the Rue Plastrière, you made a long speech full of clever paradoxes, which led us to imagine that you were playing a part in flattering and associating with this incorrigible race, which it is our duty to exterminate from the face of the earth. For a long time we respected the mystery of your behavior, hoping for a happy result; but at last the illusion was dispelled."

Balsamo retained his motionless, impassive demeanor, insomuch that the president became impatient.

"Three days ago," said he, "five *lettres-de-cachet* were issued. They had been demanded from the king by Monsieur de Sartines; they were filled as soon as signed, and the same day were presented to five of our principal agents, our most faithful and devoted brothers, residing in Paris. All five were arrested: two were taken to the Bastille, where they are kept in the most profound secrecy; two are at Vincennes, in the dungeon; one in the most noisome cell in Bicêtre. Did you know this circumstance?"

"No," said Balsamo.

"That is strange, after what we know of your relations

with those in power in the kingdom; but there is something stranger still."

Balsamo listened.

"To enable Monsieur de Sartines to arrest these five faithful friends, he must have had the only paper which contains the names of the victims in his possession. This paper was sent to you by the supreme council in 1769; and to you it was assigned to receive the new members, and immediately invest them with the rank which the supreme council assigned them."

Balsamo expressed by a gesture that he did not recollect the circumstance.

"I shall assist your memory. The five persons in question were represented by five Arabic characters; and these characters, in the paper you received, corresponded with the names and ciphers of the new brothers."

"Be it so," said Balsamo.

"You acknowledge it?"

"I acknowledge whatever you please."

The president looked at his assistants, as if to order them to take a note of this confession.

"Well," continued he, "on this paper — the only one, remember, which could have compromised the brothers — there was a sixth name. Do you remember it?"

Balsamo made no reply.

"The name was — *the Comte de Fenix.*"

"Agreed," said Balsamo.

"Then why, — if the names of the five brothers figured in five *lettres-de-cachet*, — why was yours respected, caressed, and favorably received at court and in the antechambers of ministers? If our brothers merited prison, you merited it also. What have you to reply?"

"Nothing."

"Ah! I can divine your answer. You may say that

the police had by private means discovered the names of the obscurer brethren, but that they were obliged to respect yours as an ambassador and a powerful man. You may even say that they did not suspect this name."

"I shall say nothing."

"Your pride outlives your honor. These names the police could have discovered only by reading the confidential note which the supreme council had sent you; and this is the way it was seen. You kept it in a coffer. Is that true?"

"It is."

"One day a woman left your house carrying the coffer under her arm. She was seen by our agents, and followed to the hôtel of the lieutenant of police, in the Faubourg St. Germain. We might have arrested the evil at its source; for if we had stopped the woman and taken the coffer from her, everything would have been safe and sure. But we obeyed the rules of our constitution, which command us to respect the secret means by which some members serve the cause, even when these means have the appearance of treason or imprudence."

Balsamo seemed to approve of this assertion, but with a gesture so little marked, that, had it not been for his previous immobility, it would have been unnoticed.

"This woman reached the lieutenant of police," said the president; "she gave him the coffer, and all was discovered. Is this true?"

"Perfectly true."

The president rose.

"Who was this woman?" he exclaimed, — "beautiful, impassioned, devotedly attached to you body and soul, tenderly loved by you; as clever, as subtle, as cunning as one of the angels of darkness who assist man to commit evil! Lorenza Feliciani is your wife, Balsamo!"

Balsamo uttered a groan of despair.

"You are convinced?" said the president.

"Conclude," replied Balsamo.

"I have not yet finished. A quarter of an hour after she had entered the hôtel of the lieutenant of police, you arrived. She had sown the treason; you came to reap the reward. The obedient servant had taken upon herself the perpetration of the crime; you came to add the finishing stroke to the infamous work. Lorenza departed alone. You renounced her, doubtless, and would not compromise yourself by accompanying her; you left triumphantly along with Madame Dubarry, summoned there to receive from your own lips the information you sold her. You entered the carriage with that prostitute, as the boatman entered the boat with the sinner, Mary the Egyptian. You left behind the papers which ruined us with Monsieur de Sartines, but you brought away the coffer which might have ruined you with us. Fortunately we saw you,—God's light is with us when we need it most."

Balsamo bowed without speaking.

"I now conclude," added the president. "Two criminals have been pointed out to the order; a woman, your accomplice, who may be innocent, perhaps, but who, in point of fact, has injured our cause by revealing one of our secrets; and you, the Master, the Great Copt, the enlightened mind, who have had the cowardice to shelter yourself behind this woman, that your treason may be less clearly seen."

Balsamo raised his head, and fixed a look upon the commissioners, burning with all the rage which had smouldered in his breast since the beginning of the interrogation.

"Why do you accuse this woman?" he asked.

"Ah! we know that you will endeavor to defend her;

we know that you love her almost to idolatry, that you prefer her to everything in the world. We know that she is your treasure of science, of happiness, and of fortune; we know that she is more precious to you than all the world beside."

"You know all this?" said Balsamo.

"Yes, we know it; and we shall punish you through her more than through yourself."

"Finish!"

The president rose.

"This is the sentence: Joseph Balsamo is a traitor,—he has broken his oath; but his knowledge is immense, and he is useful to the order. Balsamo must live for the cause he has betrayed. He belongs to his brothers, though he has cast them off."

"Ah, ah!" said Balsamo, gloomily, almost savagely.

"A perpetual prison will protect the association against any renewal of his treachery, at the same time that it will permit the brothers to receive the service from him which it has a right to expect from all its members. As to Lorenza Feliciani, a terrible punishment—"

"Hold!" said Balsamo, with perfect calmness in his voice, "you forget that I did not defend myself; the accused must be heard in his own justification. A word, a single proof, will suffice; wait one moment, and I will bring you the proof I have promised."

The commissioners seemed to deliberate for a moment.

"Ah, you fear lest I should kill myself!" said Balsamo, with a bitter smile. "If that had been my wish, it would have been already done. There is that in this ring which would have killed you all five times over had I opened it. You fear I should escape; let me be guarded if you wish it."

"Go!" said the president.

Balsamo disappeared for a short time. Then he was heard heavily descending the staircase. He entered, bearing the cold, rigid, and discolored body of Lorenza upon his shoulder, her white hand hanging to the ground.

"Here is the woman I adored, who was my treasure, my only happiness, my life! — the woman who, as you say, has betrayed you. Here, take her! God did not wait for you to punish, gentlemen!"

And with a movement quick as lightning he let the corpse glide from his arms, and sent it rolling on the carpet to the feet of the judges, whom her cold hair and the dead and motionless hands touched, to their great horror, while by the light of the lamps they saw the wide gash gaping in her neck, white as a swan's.

"Now pronounce the sentence!" added Balsamo.

The horrified judges uttered a cry, and seized with maddening terror fled in indescribable confusion. Soon their horses were heard neighing and trampling in the courtyard, the outer gate grated on its hinges, and then silence, the solemn silence of the tomb, returned to seat itself beside despair and death.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DOOM.

WHILE the terrible scene, which we have just described, was taking place between Balsamo and the Five Masters, nothing apparently had changed in the rest of the house. The old man had seen Balsamo enter his apartment and bear away Lorenza's corpse; and this new incident had recalled him to what was passing around him. But when he saw Balsamo take up the dead body and descend with it into the lower rooms, he fancied it was the last and eternal adieu of this man whose heart he had broken, and fear descended on his soul with an overwhelming force, which for him who had done all to avoid death doubled the horror of the grave. Not knowing for what purpose Balsamo had left him, nor whither he was going, he began to call out, "Acharat! Acharat!" It was the name his pupil had borne in childhood, and he hoped it would have retained its influence over the man.

But Balsamo continued to descend. Having touched the floor, he even forgot to make the trap reascend, and disappeared in the corridor.

"Ah!" cried Althotas, "see what man is,—a blind, ungrateful animal! Return, Acharat, return! Ah, you prefer the ridiculous object called a woman to the perfection of humanity which I represent! You prefer a fragment of life to immortality!

"But no!" he exclaimed, after a moment's pause, "the wretch has deceived his master! He has betrayed my

confidence like a vile robber; he feared that I should live because I surpass him so much in science; he wanted to inherit the laborious work I had nearly concluded; he laid a trap for me, his master and benefactor! Oh, Acharat!"

And gradually the old man's anger was aroused, his cheeks were dyed with a hectic tinge, his half-closed eyes seemed to glow with the gloomy brightness of those phosphorescent lights which sacrilegious children place in the cavities of a human skull. Then he cried: "Return, Acharat, return! Look to yourself! You know that I have conjurations which evoke fire and raise up supernatural spirits! I have evoked Satan, — him whom the magi called Phegor, in the mountains of Gad, — and Satan was forced to leave his bottomless pit and appear before me! I have conferred with the seven angels who were ministers of God's anger upon the same mountain where Moses received the ten commandments! By my will alone I have kindled the great tripod with its seven flames which Trajan stole from the Jews! Take care, Acharat, take care!"

But there was no reply. Then his brain became more and more clouded. "Do you not see, wretch," said he, in a choking voice, "that death is about to seize me as it would the meanest mortal? Listen, Acharat! you may return; I will do you no harm. Return! I renounce the fire; you need not fear the evil spirit, nor the seven avenging angels. I renounce vengeance, and yet I could strike you with such terror that you would become an idiot and as cold as marble, for I can stop the circulation of the blood. Come back, then, Acharat! I will do you no harm, but on the contrary I can do you much good. Acharat, instead of abandoning me, watch over my life, and you shall have all my treasures and all my secrets. Make me live, Acharat, that I may teach them to you.

See, see!" and with gleaming eyes and trembling fingers he pointed to the numerous objects, papers, and rolls scattered through the vast apartment. Then he waited, collecting all his fast-failing faculties to listen.

"Ah, you come not!" he cried. "You think I shall die thus, and through this murder — for you are murdering me — everything will belong to you. Madman! were you even capable of reading the manuscripts which I alone am able to decipher; were the spirit even to grant you my wisdom for a lifetime of one, two, or three centuries, to make use of the materials I have gathered, — you should not inherit them! No, no, a thousand times no! Return, Acharat, return for a moment, were it only to behold the ruin of this whole house, — were it only to contemplate the beautiful spectacle I am preparing for you! Acharat! Acharat! Acharat!"

There was no answer, for Balsamo was during this time replying to the accusation of the Five Masters by showing them the mutilated body of Lorenza. The cries of the deserted old man grew louder and louder; despair redoubled his strength, and his hoarse yellings, reverberating in the long corridors, spread terror afar, like the roaring of a tiger who has broken his chain or forced the bars of his cage.

"Ah, you do not come!" shrieked Althotas; "you despise me; you calculate upon my weakness! Well, you shall see! Fire! fire! fire!"

He articulated these cries with such vehemence that Balsamo, now freed from his terrified visitors, was roused by them from the depth of his despair. He took Lorenza's corpse in his arms, reascended the staircase, laid the dead body upon the sofa where two hours previously it had reposed in sleep, and mounting upon the trap, he suddenly appeared before Althotas.

"Ah, at last!" cried the old man, with savage joy. "You were afraid; you saw I could revenge myself, and you came! You did well to come, for in another moment I should have set this chamber on fire!"

Balsamo looked at him, shrugged his shoulders slightly, but did not deign to reply.

"I am athirst!" cried Althotas, — "I am athirst! Give me drink, Acharat!"

Balsamo made no reply; he did not move; he looked at the dying man as if he would not lose an atom of his agony.

"Do you hear me?" howled Althotas, — "do you hear me?"

The same silence, the same immobility on the part of the gloomy spectator.

"Do you hear me, Acharat?" vociferated the old man, almost tearing his throat in his efforts to give emphasis to this last burst of rage; "water! give me water!"

Althotas's features were rapidly decomposing. There was no longer fire in his looks, but only an unearthly glare; the blood no longer coursed beneath his sunken and cadaverous cheek; motion and life were almost dead within him. His long sinewy arms, in which he had carried Lorenza like a child, were raised, but inert and powerless as the membranes of a polypus. His fury had worn out the feeble spark which despair had for a moment revived in him.

"Ah!" said he, "ah! you think I do not die quickly enough! You mean to make me die of thirst! You gloat over my treasures and my manuscripts with longing eyes! Ah, you think you have them already! Wait, wait!" And with an expiring effort, Althotas took a small bottle from beneath the cushions of the armchair and uncorked it. At the contact with the air, a liquid

flame burst from the glass vessel, and Althotas, like some potent magician, shook this flame around him.

Instantly the manuscripts piled round the old man's armchair, the books scattered over the room, the rolls of paper disinterred with so much trouble from the pyramid of Cheops and the subterranean depths of Herculaneum, took fire with the rapidity of gunpowder. A sheet of flame overspread the marble slab, and seemed to Balsamo's eyes like one of those flaming circles of hell of which Dante sings.

Althotas no doubt expected that Balsamo would rush into the flames to save this valuable inheritance which the old man was annihilating along with himself, but he was mistaken. Balsamo did not stir, but stood calm and isolated upon the trap-door, where the fire could not reach him.

The flames wrapped Althotas in their embrace, but instead of terrifying him, it seemed as if the old man found himself once more in his proper element, and that, as with the salamanders sculptured on our ancient castles, the fire caressed instead of consuming him.

Balsamo still stood gazing at him. The fire had seized upon the woodwork, and completely surrounded the old man; it roared around the feet of the massive oaken chair on which he was seated, and what was most strange, though it was already consuming the lower part of his body he did not seem to feel it.

On the contrary, at the contact with the seemingly purifying element, the dying man's muscles seemed gradually to distend, and an indescribable serenity overspread his features like a mask. Isolated from his body at this last hour, the old prophet on his car of fire seemed ready to wing his way aloft. The mind, all-powerful in its last moments, forgot its attendant matter, and sure of having

nothing more to expect below, it stretched ardently upward to those higher spheres to which the fire seemed to bear it.

From this moment the eyes of Althotas, which at the first reflection of the flames seemed to have been re-endowed with life, gazed vaguely and abstractedly at some point in space which was neither heaven nor earth; they seemed trying to pierce the horizon. Calm and resigned, analyzing all sensation, listening to all pain, with his last breath on earth the old magician muttered, in a hollow voice, his adieus to power, to life, and hope. "Ah!" said he, "I die without regret. I have possessed everything on earth, and have known all; I have had all power which is granted to a human creature; I had almost reached immortality!"

Balsamo uttered a sardonic laugh, whose gloomy echo arrested the old man's attention. Through the flames which surrounded him as with a veil, he cast a look of savage majesty upon his pupil. "You are right," said he; "one thing I had not foreseen, — God!"

Then, as if this mighty word had uprooted his whole soul, Althotas fell back upon his chair. He had given up to God that last breath which he had hoped to withhold from him.

Balsamo heaved a sigh, and without endeavoring to save anything from the precious pile upon which this second Zoroaster had stretched himself to die, he again descended to Lorenza, and touched the spring of the trap, which readjusted itself in the ceiling, veiling from his sight the immense furnace, which roared like the crater of a volcano.

During the whole night the fire roared above Balsamo's head like a whirlwind, without his making an effort either to extinguish it or to escape. Stretched beside Lorenza's

body, he was insensible to all danger. But contrary to his expectations, when the fire had devoured all, and laid bare the vaulted walls of stone, annihilating all the valuable contents, it extinguished itself; and Balsamo heard its last roarings, which, like those of Althotas, gradually died away in plaints and sighs.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PERPLEXITIES.

THE Duc de Richelieu was in his bed-chamber at his house in Versailles, taking his vanilla chocolate in company with Monsieur Rafté who was going over his accounts. The duke, deeply engaged in looking at his face reflected in a mirror a short distance from him, was giving very little attention to the calculations, more or less exact, of his secretary.

Suddenly a noise of creaking shoes in the antechamber gave notice of a visit, and the duke hastily finished his chocolate, looking uneasily toward the door. There were times when Monsieur de Richelieu, like coquettes of advanced age, did not like to receive visitors.

The valet announced Monsieur de Taverney. The duke doubtless was about to send some excuse, which would have put off until another day, or at least until another hour, his friend's visit, but as soon as the door was opened the petulant old man darted into the room, offered while passing by him the end of his finger to the marshal, and hastened to bury himself in an immense easy-chair which groaned under the shock rather than under his weight.

Richelieu saw his friend go by him like one of those fantastic men in whose existence Hoffman has since persuaded us to believe. He heard the creaking of the chair, he heard a heavy sigh, and turning to his guest, "Eh!

Baron," said he, "what is the news? You seem as sad as death."

"Sad," said Taverney, — "sad!"

"*Pardieu!* that did not seem to me a sigh of joy."

The baron looked at the marshal in a manner which said that while Rafté was present there would be no explanation of the sigh. Rafté understood without taking the trouble to turn around; for he, as well as his master, sometimes looked in mirrors. And he discreetly withdrew. The baron looked after him, and as the door closed behind him, said, "Do not say 'sad,' Duke; say 'anxious,' and mortally anxious."

"Bah!"

"Indeed," cried Taverney, clasping his hands, "I advise you to pretend surprise. For more than a month you have put me off with vague words, such as, 'I have not seen the king,' or again, 'The king has not seen me,' or perhaps, 'The king treats me coolly.' *Cordieu!* Duke, that is not the way to answer an old friend. A month, — why, that is eternity!"

Richelieu shrugged his shoulders. "What the devil do you want me to say, Baron?" he replied.

"Eh! the truth!"

"*Mordieu!* I have told you the truth; *mordieu!* I drum it into your ears, but you will not believe it, that is all."

"What! you would like me to believe that you, duke and peer, a marshal of France, a gentleman of the bedchamber, do not see the king, — you who go to the levée every morning? Nonsense!"

"I have said so, and I repeat it, although it may not be credible; for three weeks I have been present every day at the levée, — I, duke and peer, marshal of France, gentleman of the bed-chamber!"

"And the king does not speak to you, and you do not speak to the king? And you expect me to swallow such a fib as that?" said Taverney.

"Eh! Baron, my friend, you are getting impertinent; you give me the lie as if we were at least forty years younger and still skilful with the small-sword."

"But I am enraged, Duke."

"Ah, that is another thing; be enraged my dear friend, —I am enraged myself."

"You are enraged?"

"And with reason, as you must admit when I tell you that since that day the king has not looked at me; when I tell you that his Majesty has constantly turned his back on me; that whenever I have smiled pleasantly upon him, the king has responded with a frightful grimace. In short, I am weary of going to Versailles to be mocked at! Come! What would you have me do about it?"

Taverney was fiercely biting his finger-nails during this reply of the marshal. "I do not understand it at all," said he, at last.

"Nor I, Baron."

"Indeed, I suppose the king laughs at these anxieties; for in short —"

"Yes; that is just what I say, Baron, in short —"

"Come, Duke, we must find some way out of this perplexity; we must contrive some skilful plan by which we can reach an explanation of all this."

"Baron, Baron," replied Richelieu; "there is danger in provoking explanations from kings."

"You think so?"

"Yes. Do you want me to tell you something?"

"Speak."

"Well, I suspect something."

"And what?" asked the baron, haughtily.

"Ah! now you are getting angry."

"With reason, it seems to me."

"Then, let us stop talking."

"On the contrary, let us go on; but explain yourself."

"The devil is in you with your explanations. Indeed, it is a monomania; beware of it."

"You are charming, Duke; you see all our plans obstructed, you see an unaccountable delay in the progress of my affairs, and you advise me to wait!"

"What delay? Tell me."

"In the first place, see this."

"A letter?"

"Yes, from my son."

"Ah! The colonel."

"Fine colonel!"

"Good! and what is there new down there?"

"That for nearly a month Philippe has been awaiting at Rheims the appointment promised him by the king; that he has not received this appointment; and that the regiment sets out in two days."

"The devil! The regiment sets out?"

"Yes, for Strasburg."

"So that if Philippe does not receive this commission within two days — "

"Well, in two days Philippe will be here."

"Yes, I understand, — they have forgotten the poor boy; it is often so in the bureaus organized like those of the new minister. Ah! if I had been minister, the appointment would have been sent!"

"Ahem!" said Taverney.

"What do you say?"

"I say that I do not believe a word of it."

"What!"

"If you had been minister, you would have sent Philippe to the five hundred devils."

"Oh!"

"And his father too."

"Oh, oh!"

"And his sister farther still."

"It is pleasant to talk with you, Taverney; you are full of spirit. But let us say no more about it."

"I ask nothing better for my own part; but it will not do for my son, — his position is intolerable. Duke, it is absolutely necessary to see the king."

"Eh! that is all I do, I tell you."

"To speak to him, then."

"Eh! my dear friend, you cannot speak to the king if he will not speak to you."

"Force him."

"Ah! I am not the pope."

"Then," said Taverney, "I am determined to speak to my daughter; for there is something equivocal in all this, Monsieur le Duc."

This word had a magical effect. Richelieu had studied Taverney; he knew him for a roué like Monsieur Lafare or Monsieur de Nocé, friends of his youth, whose reputation was unblemished. He feared the alliance of father and daughter; he feared something, he knew not what, which might disgrace him. "Well, do not be angry," said he; "I will try one more plan. But I must have a pretext."

"You have a pretext."

"What is it?"

"The king has made a promise."

"To whom?"

"To my son. And this promise —"

"Well?"

"He must be reminded of it."

"Indeed, that is an expedient. Have you that letter?"

"Yes."

"Let me have it."

Taverney drew it from his vest pocket and handed it to the duke, urging him to the exercise both of caution and of boldness.

"Fire and water," said Richelieu. "Come, we are talking extravagantly. No matter, the wine is drawn, we must drink."

He rang the bell.

"Bring my clothes and see that the carriage is ready," said the duke. Then turning to Taverney, he said with an uneasy manner, "Will you assist at my toilet, Baron?"

Taverney knew that he would trouble his friend by accepting, and replied, "No, my friend, it is impossible; I must take a turn about the city. Where will you meet me?"

"Why, at the château. It is important that you too should see his Majesty."

"You think so?" said Taverney, delighted.

"I insist upon it; I wish you to see for yourself that what I said is true."

"I do not doubt it; but since you wish — "

"You are very glad to, eh?"

"To be frank, yes."

"Well, in the Glass Gallery at eleven o'clock, while I go in to see his Majesty."

"I will be there; adieu."

"Without ill-will, dear Baron," said Richelieu, who even up to the last moment sought to avoid making an enemy of a man the extent of whose power he did not know.

Taverney got into his carriage and went off, solitary and thoughtful, to take a long drive in the gardens, while Richelieu, left to the care of his valet, made himself young again at his ease, which important business occupied the illustrious hero of Mahon not less than two hours. It was, however, much less time than Taverney in his own mind had allowed him for it; and the baron, on the lookout, saw, at eleven o'clock precisely, the marshal's carriage stop before the entrance of the palace, where the officers in waiting saluted Richelieu, and the ushers conducted him forward.

Taverney's heart beat violently. More slowly than his eager spirit would have urged he repaired to the Gallery of Mirrors, where numerous courtiers, officers bearing petitions, and ambitious lordlings, stood like statues on the slippery floor, — appropriate support for the courtiers of Fortune.

Taverney mingled with the crowd, taking the precaution to place himself in a corner within reach of the marshal when the latter should leave the presence of his Majesty.

"Oh!" muttered he, between his teeth, "that I should be excluded with these country squires and dirty soldiers, — I, who a month ago took supper in private with his Majesty!" And his frowning brow gave expression to more than one infamous suspicion which would have made poor Andrée blush.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE MEMORY OF KINGS.

RICHELIEU, in fulfilment of his promise, went bravely and placed himself in view of his Majesty just when Monsieur de Condé was handing him his shirt.

The king, on seeing the marshal, turned away with so sudden a movement that the shirt fell to the floor, and the prince drew back in surprise.

"Pardon, my cousin," said Louis XV., to show the prince that there was nothing personal to him in this quick movement. Richelieu was thus apprised that this expression of anger was directed against him. But as if he had come determined to provoke this anger, if it should be necessary, with a view to a serious explanation, he faced about, as at Fontenoy, and placed himself where the king would pass him in going into his cabinet.

The king, no longer seeing the marshal, began to speak freely and graciously; he finished dressing, arranged for a hunt at Marly, and held a long consultation with his cousin about it, — for Messieurs de Condé have always had the reputation of being great sportsmen. But when he was passing into his cabinet after everybody else had gone away, he perceived Richelieu posing with all his grace for the most charming reverence which had been made since that of Lauzun, who, it will be remembered, bowed so finely.

Louis XV. stopped, almost abashed. "Still here, Monsieur de Richelieu?" said he.

"At your Majesty's service; yes, Sire."

"You have not, then, left Versailles?"

"For forty years, Sire, I have seldom gone away, except when in your Majesty's service."

The king stopped in front of the marshal and said, "You want something of me, do you not?"

"I, Sire?" said Richelieu, smiling. "Eh, what should I want?"

"But you pursue me, Duke, *morbleu!* I perceive it clearly enough."

"Yes, Sire, with my love and my respect. Thanks, Sire."

"Oh! you pretend not to understand me; but you understand me wonderfully well. And I, believe me, Monsieur le Maréchal, have nothing to say to you."

"Nothing, Sire?"

"Absolutely nothing."

Richelieu armed himself with a profound indifference. "Sire," said he, "I have always had the pleasure of believing, in my soul and conscience, that my diligence in the service of the king was disinterested. A great thing to say, Sire, of these forty years of which I have spoken to your Majesty; also, the envious will not say that the king has ever granted me a favor. On that point, fortunately, my reputation is secure."

"Eh, Duke, if you want anything, ask,— but ask quickly."

"Sire, I want absolutely nothing; and for the present I confine myself to begging your Majesty —"

"What?"

"That you will admit to your presence to express his gratitude —"

"Who is it?"

"Sire, one who is under great obligation to the king."

"What do you mean?"

"One, Sire, on whom your Majesty has bestowed a signal honor. Ah! when one has had the honor of sitting at your Majesty's table, when one has enjoyed that graceful conversation, that charming humor which makes your Majesty the most admirable companion, — then, Sire, one never forgets, and he eagerly seeks to continue a custom so delightful."

"Your language is very extravagant, Monsieur de Richelieu."

"Oh, Sire — "

"In short, of whom do you speak?"

"Of my friend Taverney."

"Of your friend?" cried the king.

"Pardon, Sire!"

"Taverney!" replied the king, with an accent of terror which to the duke was very surprising.

"What could you expect, Sire? An old comrade — " he stopped a moment — "a man who served under Villars with me — " He stopped again. "You know, Sire, that in this world we call friends all whom we know; those whom we do not know are our enemies. It is a polite word, which often does not mean anything."

"It is a compromising word, Duke," replied the king, sharply; "it is a word to be used with reserve."

"The utterances of your Majesty are precepts of wisdom. Monsieur de Taverney, then — "

"Monsieur de Taverney is an immoral man."

"Indeed, Sire, on the word of a gentleman, I had mistrusted it myself."

"A man without delicacy, Monsieur le Maréchal."

"As for his delicacy, I will not speak of it before your Majesty. I vouch only for what I know."

"What! you do not vouch for the delicacy of your

friend, of an old comrade, of a man who has served with you under Villars, of a man whom you have presented to me, — in short — You know *him*, however!"

"Him, certainly, Sire; but not his delicacy. Sully told your ancestor, Henri IV., that he had seen his fever go off dressed in a green robe; but I humbly confess, Sire, that I have never known how the delicacy of Taverney was dressed."

"Indeed, Marshal, — it is I who say it, — he is a bad man, who has played a villanous rôle."

"Oh! if your Majesty says so —"

"Yes, Monsieur, I say it."

"Your Majesty relieves my mind by speaking in this way. No, I confess Taverney is not a flower of delicacy; and I have perceived it already. But, Sire, while your Majesty did not deign to tell me your opinion —"

"This is it, Monsieur, I detest him."

"Ah! the judgment is pronounced, Sire. Happily for this unfortunate," continued Richelieu, "a powerful intercessor pleads for him with your Majesty."

"What do you mean?"

"If the father has had the misfortune to displease the king —"

"And very much."

"I do not deny it, Sire."

"What do you say, then?"

"I say that an angel with blue eyes and blond hair —"

"I do not understand you, Duke."

"That may be, Sire."

"I wish to understand you, however, I confess."

"An ordinary person like me, Sire, trembles at the idea of lifting even a corner of the veil which shelters so many charming mysteries of love; but I repeat it, how much

indulgence Taverney must owe to the one who mitigates in his favor the royal indignation. Oh, yes; Mademoiselle Andrée must be an angel!"

"Mademoiselle is a little monster physically, as her father is a monster morally!" cried the king.

"Oh!" cried Richelieu, astounded; "are we all mistaken, and this beautiful appearance —"

"Never speak to me of that girl, Duke; it makes me shudder only to think of her."

Richelieu clasped his hands affectedly. "Oh, my God!" said he, "appearances have turned out — Had not your Majesty, the best judge in the kingdom, infallibility itself, assured me of that, how could I believe it? What, Sire, so deformed?"

"More than that, Monsieur; affected with a malady,— a dreadful, lurking malady, Duke. But, for God's sake, not a word more about her, or you will kill me!"

"Oh, Heaven!" cried Richelieu, "I will not open my mouth again on the subject, Sire. To kill your Majesty! — oh, what a sorrow! What a family it is! He must be unhappy, the poor boy!"

"Of whom do you speak to me now?"

"Oh, this time of a faithful, sincere, devoted servant of your Majesty. Oh, Sire, he is a model, and you have judged him correctly. This time, I vouch for it, your favor has been bestowed upon the right person."

"But whom are you talking about, Duke? Finish what you have to say, for I am in a hurry."

"I speak," replied Richelieu, gently, "of the son of the one, and the brother of the other. I speak of Philippe de Taverney, that gallant young man to whom your Majesty has given a regiment."

"I! I have given a regiment to some one?"

"Yes, Sire; a regiment which Philippe de Taverney

is still waiting for, it is true, but which you have really given him."

"I?"

"Bless me, I believe so, Sire!"

"You are mad!"

"Oh!"

"I have given nothing at all, Marshal."

"Truly?"

"But what the devil is that to you?"

"But, Sire —"

"Does this affair concern you?"

"Not the least in the world."

"You have perhaps sworn to burn me by a slow fire with this fagot of thorns?"

"What do you mean, Sire? I thought — I see now that I was mistaken — I thought that you had promised —"

"But it is not my business, Duke; I have a minister of war. I never give regiments. A regiment! — a pretty story they have told you! Ah! you are the advocate of this brood? I told you that you did wrong to speak to me; see how you have set all my blood flowing the wrong way."

"Oh, Sire!"

"Yes, the wrong way. Though the Devil be the advocate, I will not submit to this any longer;" and with these words the king turned his back upon the duke, and quite furious, took refuge in his cabinet, leaving Richelieu in the deepest misery.

"Ah! now," muttered the old marshal, "I know where I stand."

And dusting off with his handkerchief the powder which in the heat of the encounter had fallen upon his clothes, Richelieu directed his steps toward the gallery in

the corner of which his friend was waiting with burning impatience.

No sooner did the marshal appear than, like a spider pouncing on his prey, the baron ran to get the latest intelligence. With eager eye, his heart in his mouth, his arms extended, he presented himself. "Well! what news?" he asked.

"There is something new, Monsieur," replied Richelieu, straightening himself up, with a scornful curl of the lips and a gesture of contempt; "it is that I beg you never to address me another word."

Taverney looked at the duke with wondering eyes.

"Yes; you have greatly displeased the king," continued Richelieu, "and in displeasing the king, you offend me."

Taverney in his stupefaction stood riveted to the marble floor as if his feet had taken root there.

Richelieu meantime continued on his way. Then arriving at the Gallery of Mirrors, where his valet was in waiting, "To Luciennes!" cried he. And he disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ANDRÉE'S SWOONS.

TAVERNEY, when he had come to himself and examined thoroughly this misfortune, as he called it, knew that the moment had come for a serious explanation with the first cause of these great alarms. Consequently, boiling with anger, he directed his steps to the residence of Andrée.

The young girl was giving the last touch to her toilet, raising her rounded arms to fasten behind her ear two rebellious tresses of hair. She heard the step of her father in the antechamber just as, with book under her arm, she was leaving her apartment.

"Ah! good-day, Andrée," said Monsieur de Taverney, "are you going out?"

"Yes, father."

"Alone?"

"As you see."

"Are you, then, still alone?"

"Since the disappearance of Nicole, I have not procured a maid."

"But you cannot dress yourself, Andrée, that will be injurious to you; a woman carelessly dressed has no success at court. I should recommend to you quite another course, Andrée."

"Excuse me, father, but Madame la Dauphine is waiting for me."

"I assure you, Andrée," replied Taverney, getting excited as he went on, "I assure you, Mademoiselle, that with this simplicity you will be ridiculous."

"Father —"

"Ridicule kills everywhere, and especially at court."

"Monsieur, I will think of it. But just now Madame la Dauphine will be pleased to have me dressed less elegantly that I may be more prompt in responding to her summons."

"Go, then, and return, I beg, as soon as you are free; for I wish to talk with you of a serious matter."

"Yes, father," said Andrée, and she tried to go on her way.

The baron gave her a searching look. "Stop, stop," he cried, "you cannot go out so; you have forgotten your rouge, Mademoiselle, you are so pale as to be repulsive."

"I, father?" said Andrée, stopping.

"Why, when you look at yourself in the mirror what do you think? Your cheeks are as white as wax, and you have circles under your eyes. You will frighten people if you go out in that condition, Mademoiselle."

"I have not time to make any change in my toilet, father."

"It is provoking; indeed, it is disgusting!" cried Taverney, shrugging his shoulders; "there is only one such woman in the world, and I have her for a daughter. What a cruel fate! Andrée! Andrée!"

But Andrée was already at the bottom of the stairs. She came back.

"At least," cried Taverney, "say that you are sick; make yourself interesting, *mordieu!* if you cannot make yourself beautiful!"

"That will be very easy to do, father, and I can truthfully say that I am sick; for I am really suffering at this moment."

"Well," grumbled the baron; "we needed only that, —sick!" Then between his teeth, "Plague take the haughty prudes!" And he returned to his daughter's chamber where he occupied himself in looking carefully for anything which might aid his conjectures and help him form an opinion.

Meantime Andrée crossed the square and walked along by the flower-beds. From time to time she raised her head to breathe more deeply; for the perfume of the newly opened flowers went to her head and made her dizzy. Thus disturbed, almost staggering under the heat of the sun, the young girl arrived, struggling with an unfamiliar sickness, at the antechambers of Trianon, when Madame de Noailles, standing upon the threshold of the cabinet of the dauphiness, gave Andrée to understand with the first words she spoke that it was time for her to arrive and that they were expecting her.

The abbé, reader by appointment to the princess, was taking breakfast with her Royal Highness, who often admitted to such privileges those persons with whom she was intimate. The abbé was praising the excellence of those French rolls which German housekeepers pile up so carefully around a cup of coffee and cream. The abbé was talking instead of reading, and was relating to the dauphiness all the news from Vienna which he had received at the houses of the journalists and diplomatists; for at this period politics were openly discussed, —as freely indeed as in the most secret recesses of government offices; and it was not unusual for the ministry to acquire information which these gentlemen of the Palais-Royal or of the parks of Versailles had divined or perhaps fabricated.

The abbé spoke especially of the recent rumors of a threatened outbreak, occasioned by the high price of grain, which Monsieur de Sartines had quickly sup-

pressed by sending to the Bastille five of the heaviest monopolizers.

Andrée came in. The dauphiness too had her days of caprice and headache; the abbé had interested her; the thought of Andrée's book following his conversation vexed her. Consequently she warned her second reader not to be late again, adding that punctuality, good in itself, was especially so when the occasion called for it.

Andrée, confounded by the reproach and wounded by its injustice, made no reply, although she might have said that she had been detained by her father and forced to come slowly because she was suffering so much. No; troubled and oppressed, she bent her head, and as if she were going to die, closed her eyes and lost her balance. But for the support of Madame de Noailles she would have fallen.

"How awkward your bearing is, Mademoiselle!" muttered Madame Etiquette.

Andrée did not answer.

"But, Duchess, she is sick!" cried the dauphiness, rising to go to Andrée.

"No, no," said Andrée, quickly, her eyes full of tears; "no, your Highness, I am well; or rather I am better."

"But see, she is as white as her handkerchief, Duchess. It is my fault, I scolded her. Poor child, sit down, I wish it."

"Madame —"

"Come, when I command! Give her your folding chair, Abbé."

Andrée sat down, and gradually, under the gentle influence of this kindness, her mind became composed and the color returned to her cheeks.

"Well, Mademoiselle, can you read now?" asked the dauphiness.

"Oh, yes, indeed; I hope so, at least."

And Andrée opened the book at the place where she had left off reading the evening before, and with a voice which she tried to steady, to make her reading as intelligible and agreeable as possible, she began. But she had read hardly two or three pages when the little black letters dancing before her eyes began to go round and round, and finally became illegible.

Andrée grew pale again; cold perspiration rose from her breast to her forehead, and that black circle around the eyes, with which Taverney had reproached his daughter so bitterly, increased to such a degree that the dauphiness, who had looked up when Andrée stopped reading, cried out, "See, Duchess, indeed this child is very sick; she is fainting."

And the dauphiness herself ran to get a bottle of salts which she made her reader inhale. Thus revived, Andére tried to pick up the book, but the effort was in vain; her hands kept up a nervous trembling which for some time nothing could quiet.

"Most assuredly, Duchess," said the dauphiness, "Andrée is suffering, and she must not aggravate her trouble by staying here."

"Then Mademoiselle must return directly home," said the duchess.

"And why so, Madame?" asked the dauphiness.

"Because," replied the lady of honor, with a low bow, "because the small-pox begins in this way."

"The small-pox?"

"Yes, fainting-fits, swoons, chills."

The abbé thought himself materially concerned in the danger indicated by Madame de Noailles, for he got up, and thanks to the liberty which this indisposition of a woman gave him, he slipped away on tip-toe so quietly that no one noticed his departure.

When Andrée saw herself, so to speak, in the arms of the dauphiness, the shame of having annoyed to this degree so great a princess renewed her strength, or rather her courage. She went to the window to breathe more freely.

"There is no need of going to the window for fresh air, my dear child," said Madame la Dauphine; "pray, return home, I will go with you."

"Oh, I assure you, Madame," said Andrée, "that I am quite recovered; I can go alone very well if your Highness will give me permission to retire."

"Yes, yes; and be calm," replied the dauphiness; "you shall not be scolded any more since you are so sensitive, little rogue."

Andrée, touched by this kindness, which seemed like a sister's friendship, kissed the hand of her protectress and left the apartment, while the dauphiness looked after her anxiously. When she was at the foot of the steps, the dauphiness called to her from the window, "Do not go in immediately, Mademoiselle. Walk a little while in the garden; this sunshine will do you good."

"Oh, *mon Dieu,* Madame! Thanks!" murmured Andrée.

"And please ask the abbé to return; he is taking his botanical course down there in that bed of Holland tulips."

Andrée was obliged to make a detour in order to meet the abbé. She crossed the flower-garden, and went on with bowed head, a little dull still from the effect of the strange dizziness she had suffered with all the morning; she paid no attention to the birds which, startled, flew over the hedges and flower-beds, nor to the bees humming over the thyme and lilacs. She did not even notice, twenty feet from her, two men who were talking together,

one of whom followed her with a troubled and anxious gaze.

These two men were Gilbert and Monsieur de Jussieu. The former, leaning upon his spade, was listening to the learned professor, who was explaining the manner of watering delicate plants so that the water would pass into the ground and not remain on the surface. Gilbert seemed to be listening eagerly, and Monsieur de Jussieu saw nothing but what was natural in this ardor for science; for the demonstration was one which drew applause from the benches of students in the public course. Now, for a poor young gardener, was it not an unusual good fortune to receive this lesson of so great a master, given in the very presence of Nature?

"There are here, you see, my child, four kinds of earth," said Monsieur de Jussieu; "and if I chose, I could discover ten others mixed with these four primary ones. But for the inexperienced gardener, the distinction would be a little too fine. The florist must always taste the earth, as the gardener his fruits. You understand me, Gilbert?"

"Yes, Monsieur," answered Gilbert, his eyes staring, his mouth open; for he had seen Andrée, and from the place where he stood he could watch her without letting the professor suspect that he was not religiously listening to and comprehending the demonstration.

"In order to get the taste of the earth," said Monsieur de Jussieu, all the time deceived by the absent-mindedness of Gilbert, "shut up a handful in a sieve, pour some drops of water gently over it, and taste this water when it shall have filtered through the earth into a vessel underneath the sieve. The saline savors, whether acrid or insipid or flavored with certain natural essences, suit wonderfully the juices of the plants which you wish to place in it;

for in Nature, says Monsieur Rousseau, your old patron, all is analogy, assimilation, a tendency to homogeneity."

"Oh, my God!" cried Gilbert, extending his arms before him.

"What is the matter?"

"She has fainted, Monsieur, she has fainted!"

"Who, then? Are you mad?"

"She, she!"

"She?"

"Yes," replied Gilbert, eagerly, "a lady;" and his fright and paleness would have betrayed him, as well as the word "she," if Monsieur de Jussieu had not looked up to follow the direction of his hand. In doing this, Monsieur de Jussieu saw, indeed, Andrée, who had dragged herself behind a hedge and fallen prostrate on a bench. There she lay motionless, and at the point of losing consciousness.

It was the hour at which the king made his daily visit to the dauphiness, and crossed the orchard in passing from the great to the little Trianon. He now suddenly appeared. He held a vermilion peach (marvel of precocity), and was asking himself — royal egotist that he was — if it would not tend more to the happiness of France if this peach were enjoyed by him rather than by Madame la Dauphine.

The haste of Monsieur de Jussieu in running to Andrée, whom the king with his feeble sight scarcely saw and did not recognize at all, and the stifled cries of Gilbert which indicated the most profound terror, quickened the step of his Majesty.

"What is the matter? What is it?" demanded Louis XV., approaching the hedge from which only the width of a path separated him.

"The king!" cried Monsieur de Jussieu, supporting the young girl in his arms.

"The king?" murmured Mademoiselle Andrée, fainting away completely.

"But who is it?" repeated Louis XV., — "a woman? What has happened to this woman?"

"Sire, a swoon."

"Ah! let us see," said Louis XV.

"She is unconscious, Sire," added Monsieur de Jussieu, pointing to the young girl lying rigid and motionless upon the bench where he had just placed her.

The king approached, recognized Andrée, and exclaimed, shuddering, "Again! Oh, that is frightful! Those who have such maladies should stay at home. It is not proper to be dying like this all day long in public;" and Louis XV. retraced his steps toward the pavillion of Petit Trianon, muttering a thousand things hostile to poor Andrée.

Monsieur de Jussieu, who was ignorant of the antecedents, stood a moment stupefied; then, turning round and seeing Gilbert ten steps off in an attitude of fear and anxiety, "Come here, Gilbert," cried he. "You are strong; you can carry Mademoiselle de Taverney to her apartments."

"I!" cried Gilbert, trembling; "I carry her, — touch her? No, no; she would never pardon me, — no, never!" and he fled distracted, calling for aid.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DOCTOR LOUIS.

At a short distance from the place where Andrée had fainted two gardeners were working, who ran up on hearing Gilbert's cries, and obedient to the order of Monsieur de Jussieu, bore Andrée to her apartment. Gilbert followed at a distance, with head bowed, and shambling in his gait, like an assassin marching behind the body of his victim.

Monsieur de Jussieu, having reached the principal entrance, relieved the gardeners of their burden. Andrée had just opened her eyes.

The sound of voices and that significant commotion which accompanies every accident, drew Monsieur de Taverney from the apartment; he saw his daughter, tottering still, try to hold herself erect so as to ascend the steps with the help of Monsieur de Jussieu. He ran up, asking like the king, "What is the matter? what is it?"

"Nothing, father," replied Andrée, feebly, — "an ill-turn, a headache."

"Mademoiselle is your daughter?" said Monsieur de Jussieu, saluting the baron.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"I cannot leave her in better hands, then; but in the name of Heaven consult a doctor."

"Oh! it is nothing," said Andrée.

And Taverney repeated, "Certainly, it is nothing."

"I hope so," said Monsieur de Jussieu; "but indeed, Mademoiselle was very pale." And then, having assisted

Andrée to the top of the stairs, he took leave. The father and daughter were left alone.

Taverney, who during the absence of Andrée had spent his time profitably in good reflections, took the hand of Andrée, who was still standing, led her to a seat on the sofa, and sat down by her.

"Pardon, Monsieur," said Andrée; "but be so good as to open the window. I need air."

"I wished to talk seriously with you, Andrée, and in this cage they have given you for a dwelling, a breath can be heard on all sides; but no matter, I will speak low." And he opened the window.

Then, reseating himself by the side of his daughter, he said, shaking his head, "It must be confessed that the king who at first displayed so much interest in us does not show much consideration in letting you live in such a den."

"Father," replied Andrée, "there are no accommodations at Trianon; you know that is the great defect of that residence."

"That there should be no accommodations for others," said Taverney, with an insinuating smile, "I can thoroughly understand, my daughter; but as regards yourself, I do not understand it."

"You have too good an opinion of me, Monsieur," replied Andrée, smiling; "and unfortunately everybody does not think as you do."

"All who know you, my daughter, on the contrary, think as I do."

Andrée bowed as she would have done in thanking a stranger; for she began to be uneasy at these compliments from her father.

"And," continued Taverney, in the same insinuating manner, "and — the king knows you, I suppose?" And

while speaking, he cast a look upon the young girl of intolerable inquisitiveness.

"Indeed, the king hardly knows me," replied Andrée, very naturally, "and I am of slight importance to him, as I suppose."

These words made the baron start. "Of slight importance!" he cried; "indeed, I do not understand your words, Mademoiselle. Of slight importance! indeed, you set a low value on your person."

Andrée looked at her father in astonishment.

"Yes, yes," continued the baron; "I say it, and I repeat it, you are so modest as to forget personal dignity."

"Oh, Monsieur, you exaggerate; the king has been interested by the misfortunes of our family, it is true; the king has deigned to do something for us; but there are so many unfortunates about his Majesty's throne, so many gifts fall from the royal hand that he would naturally forget us after the bestowal of his favor."

Taverney looked steadily at his daughter, not without a certain admiration of her reserve and impenetrable discretion. "Come," said he, drawing nearer to her, "come, my dear Andrée; your father shall be the first solicitor who addresses you, and in this character I hope that you will not repulse him."

Andrée in her turn looked at her father like a woman asking an explanation.

"Come," continued he, "we beg you, intercede for us, do something for your family — "

"What do you mean? what do you want me to do?" cried Andrée, stupefied by his tone and the import of his word.

"Are you willing, or not, to ask something for me and for your brother? Speak!"

"Monsieur," replied Andrée, "I will do all that you

tell me to do; but indeed, do you not fear that we shall seem too avaricious? The king has already given me a necklace worth, you say, more than one hundred thousand francs; his Majesty has besides promised a regiment to my brother. We take you see a considerable part of the gifts of the court."

Taverney could not restrain a burst of harsh and scornful laughter. "So," said he, "you think that is sufficient compensation, Mademoiselle?"

"I know, Monsieur, that your services are of great value," replied Andrée.

"Eh!" cried Taverney, impatient; "who the devil is talking of my services?"

"What are you talking about, then?"

"Indeed, you are playing with me a game of foolish dissembling!"

"Why should I dissemble, *mon Dieu?*" asked Andrée.

"But I know all, my daughter!"

"You know?"

"All, I tell you."

"All what, Monsieur?" An instinctive blush, born of this gross attack upon the most modest of consciences, mantled the cheeks of Andrée.

The respect of the father for the child arrested Taverney in the rapid flow of his questions. "Well!" said he, "as you please; you wish to play the coy, it appears, the mysterious! So be it. You leave your father and your brother to the obscurity of oblivion. Very well, but mark my words; when one does not have power from the outset, one is liable never to have it at all." And Taverney turned about on his heel.

"I do not understand you, Monsieur," said Andrée.

"Very well, I understand myself," replied Taverney.

"That is not enough when two are talking together."

"Well, I will be more clear. Make use of all the diplomacy with which you are endowed, and which is a virtue of our family, in making, while there is an opportunity, the fortune of your family and your own; and the first time you see the king tell him that your brother is waiting for his appointment, and that you are growing thin in an apartment without air and light, —in a word, do not be so ridiculous as to have too much love or too much disinterestedness."

"But, Monsieur — "

"Say that to the king, this evening, even."

"But where do you wish me to see the king?"

"And add that it is not even suitable for his Majesty to come — "

Just when Taverney, doubtless, by using more explicit terms, was about to rouse the tempest which was quietly gathering in Andrée's breast, and to provoke the explanation which would have solved the mystery, steps were heard on the stairs.

The baron stopped immediately and ran to the baluster to see who was coming to visit his daughter. Andrée was astonished to see her father step aside against the wall. Almost at the same moment the dauphiness, followed by a man dressed in black and leaning on a cane, entered the little apartment.

"Your Highness!" cried Andrée, mustering all her strength to go to meet the dauphiness.

"Yes, little invalid," replied the princess; "I bring you consolation and the doctor. Come, Doctor. Ah! Monsieur de Taverney," continued the princess, recognizing the baron, "your daughter is ill, and you take no care of this child."

"Madame —" stammered Taverney.

"Come, Doctor," said the dauphiness, with that charm-

ing kindliness which belonged only to her, — "come, feel this pulse, question these heavy eyes, and tell me what is the matter with my protegée."

"Oh, Madame, Madame, what goodness!" murmured the young girl, "how shall I have courage to receive your Royal Highness?"

"In this poor place, you mean, dear child; so much the worse for me who have given you so wretched an apartment. I will attend to that. Come, my child, give your hand to Monsieur Louis, my physician, and take care; he is a philosopher who divines, as well as a scholar who sees clearly."

Andrée, smiling, held out her hand to the doctor. The latter, a young man still, whose intelligent face expressed all that the dauphiness had said of him, had occupied himself since coming into the room in observing, first the invalid, then the locality, afterward the strange appearance of the father, which indicated annoyance but no anxiety. The scholar was about to see clearly; the philosopher had perhaps already divined.

Doctor Louis studied for a long time the pulse of the young girl and questioned her as to her symptoms.

"Complete distaste for all food," answered Andrée; "sudden twinges of pain, flushes of heat rushing suddenly to the head, spasms, palpitations, fainting-fits."

The doctor grew more and more sober as Andrée went on speaking. He finally relinquished the young girl's hand and looked away.

"Well, Doctor," said the princess to the physician, "*quid?* as the consulting physicians say. Is the child in danger, and do you condemn her to death?"

The doctor looked at Andrée and watched her a little while longer in silence. "Madame," said he, "this sickness of Mademoiselle is a very natural one."

"And dangerous?"

"No, not usually," replied the doctor, smiling.

"Ah! very well," said the princess, breathing more freely; "do not make her suffer too much."

"Oh, I shall not make her suffer at all, Madame."

"What! you order no prescription?"

"There is absolutely nothing to be done for the sickness of Mademoiselle."

"Really?"

"Nothing, Madame." And the doctor, as if to avoid an explanation, took leave of the princess under the pretext that his patients needed his attention.

"Doctor, Doctor," said the dauphiness, "if what you say is true, I am much more sick than Mademoiselle de Taverney; bring me, then, without fail, when you visit me this evening, the pills you promised me to make me sleep."

"Madame, I will prepare them myself as soon as I reach home." And he went away.

The dauphiness remained with her reader. "Do not be uneasy, my dear Andrée," said she, with a friendly smile; "your sickness need not cause any anxiety, for Doctor Louis goes away without prescribing for you."

"So much the better, Madame," replied Andrée; "for then my service with your Royal Highness need not be interrupted; and I feared that above everything. However, with all due deference to the learned doctor, I am quite ill, Madame, I assure you."

"It cannot, however, be a serious illness, since the doctor makes light of it. Go to sleep then, my child; I will send some one to wait on you, for I see that you are alone. Be so kind as to attend me, Monsieur de Taverney." She gave her hand to Andrée, and went away, having brought consolation to her as she had promised.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu, as we have seen, proceeded to Luciennes with that rapidity of decision and that sure intelligence which characterized the ambassador at Vienna and the conqueror of Mahon.

He arrived joyous and unconstrained, ascended the stairs like a young man, pulled the ears of Zamore as in the pleasant days of their friendship, and forced, so to speak, the door of that famous boudoir of blue satin where poor Lorenza had seen Madame Dubarry preparing for her journey to the Rue Saint Claude.

The countess, lying upon her sofa, was giving Monsieur d'Aiguillon her orders for the morning. Both turned round on hearing the noise, and were astounded at seeing the marshal.

"Ah, Monsieur le Duc!" cried the countess.

"Ah, my uncle!" said Monsieur d'Aiguillon.

"Eh! yes, Madame; eh! yes, nephew."

"What, it is you?"

"It is I, myself, in person."

"Better late than never," said the countess.

"Madame," said the marshal, "when we grow old we become capricious."

"Which means that you have recovered for Luciennes —"

"A great love which I should not have lost except through caprice. It is just that, and you complete my thought admirably."

"So that you return —"

"So that I return, yes;" said Richelieu, seating himself in the best chair, which he had recognized at the first glance.

"Oh, oh!" said the countess, "there is perhaps some other reason, which you do not give; caprice, — that is not enough for a man like you."

"Countess, it would be wrong in you to press me; I am better than my reputation, and if I return, do you see, it is —"

"It is?" asked the countess.

"With all my heart."

Monsieur d'Aiguillon and the countess burst out laughing.

"How fortunate we are in having a little sense with which to comprehend the sense of which you have so much!" said the countess.

"Why?"

"Yes; I assure you that fools would not understand, would wonder at, and would seek everywhere the reason for your return. Indeed, on the word of a Dubarry, you alone, dear Duke, can make entrances and exits; Molé himself is a wooden actor in comparison with you."

"Then you do not believe that it is the heart which brings me back?" cried Richelieu. "Countess, Countess, take care! you will give me a bad opinion of yourself; oh, do not laugh, nephew, or I shall call you Pierre, and shall not build anything upon you."

"Not even a little ministry?" asked the countess, and for the second time she burst out laughing, with a freedom which she did not try to conceal.

"Good! strike, strike!" said Richelieu, with affected anger, "I will not return the blows; alas, I am too old, I

can only defend myself; abuse me, Countess, abuse me! it is now a pleasure without danger."

"On the contrary, take care, Countess," said D'Aiguillon; "if my uncle talks of his weakness, we are lost. No, Monsieur le Duc, we will not strike you; for feeble as you are, or rather pretend to be, you would return the blows with interest. No, the truth is, we are delighted to see you return to us."

"Yes," said the Countess, playfully, "and in honor of your return, we fire off cannon, rockets; and you know, Duke —"

"I know nothing, Madame!" said the marshal, with child-like innocence.

"Well, in fire-works there is always some wig scorched by the sparks, some hat crushed by the rocket-stick."

The Duke touched his wig and looked at his hat.

"That is the explanation," said the Countess; "but you have come back to us, — that is the principal thing; as for me, I am, as Monsieur d'Aiguillon has told you, in high spirits. Do you know why?"

"Countess, Countess, you are going to say something spiteful!"

"Yes; but it will be the last."

"Well, go on."

"I am in good spirits, Marshal, because your return foretells fine weather."

Richelieu bowed.

"Yes," continued the Countess, "you are like those poetic birds which predict a calm. What is the name of those birds, Monsieur D'Aiguillon? — you who write poetry can tell me."

"Halcyons, Madame."

"Precisely. Ah, Marshal, you will not take offence, I hope! I am comparing you to a bird with a pretty name."

"I shall take offence so much the less, Madame," said Richelieu, with a little grimace which expressed satisfaction, — and Richelieu's satisfaction always foreboded some great wickedness, — "I shall take offence so much the less that the comparison is good."

"Do you see?"

"Yes, I bring good news."

"Ah!" said the countess.

"What is it?" asked D'Aiguillon.

"The devil! my dear Duke, you are in great haste," said the countess; "give the marshal time to make it."

"No, the devil take me! I can tell you immediately; it is made already, and even of ancient date."

"Marshal, if you have brought us any old trash —"

"Indeed!" said the marshal; "it is take, or leave, Countess."

"Well, let us take, then."

"It seems, Countess, that the king has fallen into the trap."

"Into the trap?"

"Yes, completely."

"Into what trap?"

"Into the one you have set for him."

"I!" said the countess; "I have set a trap for the king?"

"*Parbleu!* you know it very well."

"No, upon my word, I do not know it."

"Ah, Countess, it is not kind to mystify me so."

"Truly, Marshal, I do not mean to. Explain yourself, I beg you!"

"Yes, uncle, explain yourself," said D'Aiguillon, who thought he saw some evil design beneath the ambiguous smile of the marshal; "Madame is waiting, and is very anxious."

The old duke turned to his nephew. "*Pardieu!*" said he, "it would be strange if Madame la Comtesse had not taken you into her confidence, my dear D'Aiguillon. Ah, in that case, it would show that she is even deeper than I supposed."

"Me, uncle?"

"Him?"

"Doubtless you, — doubtless him. Come, Countess, let us be frank. Have you taken him in partnership in your little conspiracies against his Majesty, — this poor duke, who has played so noble a part in them?"

Madame Dubarry blushed. It was so early in the day that she had neither rouge nor patches on her face, therefore blushing was possible; but blushing was also especially dangerous.

"You look at me, both of you, with your great, handsome, wondering eyes," said Richelieu; "do I need, then, to give you information about your own affairs?"

"Yes, Marshal," said, at the same time, the duke and the countess.

"Well, the king has discovered everything, thanks to his wonderful sagacity; and he has taken fright."

"What has he discovered?" asked the countess; "tell us, for indeed, Marshal, I am dying with impatience."

"But your show of friendship with my fine nephew here —"

D'Aiguillon grew pale, and his glance at the countess seemed to say, "Do you see? I was sure there was something malicious coming."

Women are courageous in such an emergency, — much more so than men. The countess returned immediately to the combat. "Duke," said she, "I am afraid of enigmas when you fill the rôle of sphinx; for sooner or later you are sure to get the better of me. Relieve me of

anxiety, and if it is a jest indeed, let me judge the evil of it."

"Evil, Countess! it is, on the contrary, excellent!" cried Richelieu; "it is not mine, but yours, be it understood."

"I am not at all concerned in it, Marshal," said Madame Dubarry, biting her lips with an impatience which her little rebellious foot betrayed still more.

"Come, come, no pride, Countess!" continued Richelieu. "It is very good; you have feared that the king would become attached to Mademoiselle de Taverney. Oh, do not dispute it! I have had evidence of it."

"Oh, it is true! I do not deny it."

"Well, fearing this, you wished on your part to pique the king as much as possible."

"I do not deny it. Then?"

"We are coming to it, Countess. But to pique his Majesty, who is rather thick-skinned, you needed a very sharp thorn[1] — Ah, ah, ah! upon my word, what a wretched pun escaped me! Do you understand?" and the marshal begun to laugh, or to feign to laugh, boisterously, so that he could better observe, while convulsed with that hilarity, the very anxious faces of his victims.

"What play of words do you find in that, uncle?" asked D'Aiguillon, the first to recover composure, and affecting simplicity.

"You have not understood it?" said the marshal. "Ah, so much the better! it was execrable. Well, I mean that Madame la Comtesse had wished to make the king jealous, and that she had chosen for this purpose a nobleman who is handsome, witty, — in short, a marvel of Nature."

[1] French: *aiguillon.*

"Who says that?" cried the countess, furious, like all those who are powerful and in the wrong.

"Who says that? — why, everybody, Madame."

"Everybody means nobody; you know it very well, Duke."

"On the contrary, Madame, everybody means one hundred thousand people in Versailles alone; it means six hundred thousand in Paris; it means twenty-five millions in France; and you will see that I am not counting the Hague, Hamburg, Rotterdam, London, Berlin, where there are as many newspapers, in proportion, as in Paris."

"And they say in Versailles, in Paris, in France, in the Hague, in Hamburg, in Rotterdam, in London, and in Berlin — ?"

"Well, they say that you are the most intellectual, the most charming woman in Europe; they say that, thanks to that ingenious stratagem of seeming to have secured a lover — "

"A lover! and what foundation has that stupid accusation, I should like to know?"

"Accusation! what do you mean, Countess? Admiration! They know there is nothing at the bottom of it all, but they admire the stratagem. Upon what is this admiration, this enthusiasm founded? Why upon your manner, sparkling with intelligence; upon your skilful tact; upon your having pretended, with wonderful art, to remain alone that night, — you know, the night when I was at your house, when the king was at your house, and when Monsieur d'Aiguillon was at your house; the night when I left first, when the king went out second, and Monsieur d'Aiguillon the third — "

"Well! go on."

"Upon your having pretended to stay alone with D'Aiguillon, as if he were your lover; to send him out quietly

in the morning from Luciennes, also as if he were your lover; and in such a way that two or three fools, two or three gulls, like me for example, might see it and cry it from the house-tops; so that the king would know, would take fright, and not to lose you would quickly leave the little Taverney."

Madame Dubarry and D'Aiguillon could no longer retain their composure. Richelieu troubled them neither by looks nor by gestures; on the contrary, his snuff-box and his frill seemed to absorb all his attention. "In short," continued the marshal, playing with his shirt-frill, "it appears that the king has certainly left that little one."

"Duke," replied Madame Dubarry, "I declare that I do not comprehend one word of all your imaginings; and I am sure of one thing, that if the king should be questioned about it, he would not comprehend it any better."

"Really!" said the duke.

"Yes, really; and you attribute to me, and the world attributes to me more imaginative faculty than I possess. I have never wished to excite the jealousy of his Majesty by the means of which you speak."

"Countess!"

"I swear it."

"Countess, perfect diplomacy,—and there are no better diplomatists than women, — perfect diplomacy never confesses failure; for there is an anxiom in politics — I know it, who have been an ambassador — which says, 'Do not communicate to any one the means which has brought you success once, for it may bring you success twice.'"

"But Duke —"

"The means has succeeded, that is all, and the king is on very bad terms with the whole Taverney family."

"But, indeed, Duke," cried Madame Dubarry, "you have a way of supposing things peculiar to yourself."

"Ah, you do not believe that the king is at variance with the Taverney family?" said Richelieu, eluding a quarrel.

"That is not what I mean."

Richelieu tried to take the countess's hand. "You are a bird," said he.

"And you are a serpent."

"Ah, very good! I shall be eager to bring you good news again, if I am to be rewarded in this way."

"Be undeceived, uncle," said D'Aiguillon, quickly, who had understood the full significance of this manœuvre of Richelieu, "no one appreciates you so highly as Madame la Comtesse, and she was saying so to me at the very moment when you were announced."

"The fact is," said the marshal, "that I am very fond of my friends; also I wished to be the first to bring you the assurance of your triumph, Countess. Do you know that Taverney the father wished to sell his daughter to the king?"

"It has been done, I think," said Madame Dubarry.

"Oh, Countess, how crafty that man is! it is he who is the serpent. Imagine it! I was lulled to sleep by stories of friendship, of old comradeship in arms. Any one can lead me by my affections. And then to think that this rural Aristides should come straight to Paris to cut the grass under the feet of Jean Dubarry, one of the brightest of men! It has indeed required all my devotion to your interests, Countess, to give me a little good sense and penetration; upon my honor I was blind —"

"And according to what you say it is all over then?" asked Madame Dubarry.

"Oh, entirely, I assure you; I have handled this worthy purveyor so roughly that there is probably no more fight in him, and we are now masters of the situation."

"But the king?"

"The king?"

"Yes."

"Upon three points I have confessed his Majesty."

"The first?"

"The father."

"The second?"

"The daughter."

"And the third?"

"The son. Now his Majesty has condescended to call the father a — pander; his daughter an impertinent minx; and as for the son, his Majesty has not called him anything for he did not even remember him."

"Very well, we are now rid of the whole brood."

"I think so."

"Is it worth while to send that fellow back to his hole?"

"I think not; they are reduced to extremities."

"And you say that this son, to whom the king had promised a regiment — ?"

"Ah, you have a better memory than the king, Countess. It is true that Monsieur Philippe is a very pretty boy, who sends you killing glances. Indeed! he is neither colonel, nor captain, nor brother of the favorite; but at least he has been distinguished by you."

In saying this, the old duke was trying to tear the heart of his nephew with jealousy, but Monsieur d'Aiguillon was not thinking of jealousy; he was trying to account for the actions of the old marshal, and to discover the real motive for his return. After some reflections he hoped that the wind of favor alone had brought Richelieu to Luciennes. He made a sign to Madame Dubarry which the old duke saw in a pier-glass while adjusting his wig, and immediately the countess invited Richelieu to take chocolate with her.

D'Aiguillon took leave with a thousand expressions of endearment for his uncle which were returned by Richelieu. The latter remained alone with the countess before the round table which Zamore had just spread.

The old marshal observed all this manœuvring of the favorite, saying in a low tone, "Were I twenty years younger I should now be looking at the clock, saying, 'In one hour I shall be a minister,' and I should be one. What a foolish thing life is," he continued, all the time speaking to himself; "during the first part one gives the body to the service of the mind; during the second the mind, which alone has survived, becomes the servant of the body; it is absurd."

"Dear Marshal," said the countess, interrupting the private monologue of her guest, "now that we are good friends, and especially since we are by ourselves, tell me why you gave yourself so much trouble to put that little piece of affectation into the king's bed."

"Upon my word, Countess," replied Richelieu, sipping his cup of chocolate, "that is what I asked myself. I know nothing about it."

CHAPTER XL.

THE RETURN.

MONSIEUR DE RICHELIEU knew what course Philippe would take, and he might safely have foretold his return; for that morning, setting out from Versailles to go to Luciennes, he had met him on the high-road going toward Trianon, and had passed near enough to observe on his countenance indications of sadness and anxiety.

Philippe, indeed, forgotten at Rheims, first having passed through every degree of favor, then of indifference and neglect; Philippe, bored at first by expressions of friendship from the officers jealous of his advancement, then by attentions even from his superiors, — Philippe, in proportion as disfavor had tarnished with its breath this brilliant fortune, was disgusted to see friendships changed to coldness, and civility to rudeness; and in this refined soul, sorrow had taken on the characteristic of regret.

Philippe regretted very much his lieutenantship at Strasburg, now that the dauphiness had come to France; he regretted his good friends, his equals, his comrades; he regretted especially the quiet and pure private life of the paternal home, about the fireside of which La Brie was the grand priest. All trouble found consolation in silence and forgetfulness, — that sleep of active minds; then in the solitude of Taverney, which bore witness to the decay of things as well as to the ruin of individuals, there was something philosophical which spoke powerfully to the heart of the young man.

But Philippe above all felt the loss of his sister's companionship, and of her judgment, always so correct, — a judgment born of elevation of mind rather than the result of experience; for it is a remarkable and conspicuous characteristic of noble souls that they soar involuntarily, and by nature even, above the vulgar crowd, and often on account of their very elevation they escape the wounds and snares which all the cleverness of human insects of a lower order cannot always avoid, however accustomed they may be to manœuvre, to craft, to contemplation of low thoughts.

As soon as Philippe had felt ennui, discouragement overtook him, and the young man became so unhappy in his loneliness that he could not believe that Andrée, that half of himself, could be happy at Versailles when he, the half of Andrée, was suffering so cruelly at Rheims.

He wrote then to the baron the letter with which we are acquainted, and in which he announced his approaching return. This letter surprised no one, especially not the baron; what did surprise him, on the contrary, was that Philippe had had patience to wait so long, when he himself was very anxious, and for fifteen days had begged Richelieu, every time he saw him, to hasten the progress of his affairs.

Philippe, not having received the commission within the time which he himself had allowed, took leave of his officers without seeming to notice their disdain and their sarcasms, — disdain, and sarcasms quite hidden under a veil of politeness, which was still at that period a French virtue, and restrained by the natural respect which a brave man always inspires.

Consequently at the hour when he had determined to depart, — the hour up to which he had awaited his commission with more fear than desire for its coming, — he mounted his horse and took the road to Paris.

The three days' journey which he had before him looked very long, and as he proceeded on his way, his father's silence toward him, and especially that of his sister who had promised faithfully to write to him at least twice a week, assumed an ominous significance.

We have said that Philippe arrived about noon at Versailles, just as Monsieur de Richelieu was leaving it. Philippe had travelled a part of the night, having slept only a few hours at Melun ; he was so preoccupied that he did not see Monsieur de Richelieu in his carriage, and did not even recognize his livery. He went straight to the railing in the park where he had bade Andrée good-by on the day of his departure, when the young girl without any cause for distress, since the prosperity of the family was at its height, felt mounting to her brain the prophetic sense of an incomprehensible sorrow.

Philippe too on that day had been affected by a superstitious sympathy with Andrée's griefs. But gradually his mind, having recovered command of itself, had shaken off the burden ; and by a strange chance it was he, Philippe, who now without reason, after all, returned to the same place, a prey to the same fears, and without finding, alas ! even in his thought, consolation for that insuperable sadness, which, having no cause, seemed like a presentiment. When his horse stepped upon the flint stones of the pavement with a clatter of his hoofs, some one, attracted doubtless by this sound, came out from the trimmed hedge-rows. It was Gilbert, holding in his hand a pruning-bill. The gardener recognized his old master. Philippe also recognized Gilbert.

Gilbert had been wandering about in this way for a month ; like a soul in trouble, he knew not where to stop. On that day with his usual cleverness in the execution of his designs, he was occupied in choosing points of view in

the alleys where he might see the pavilion or the window of Andrée, and have constant watch upon that house without any one noticing his preoccupation, his tremblings, and his sighs.

With pruning-bill in hand to keep up appearances he ran through copse and parterre, cutting here the branches laden with flowers, under pretext of trimming, stripping there the sound bark from the young lindens, under pretext of getting resin and gum; at the same time ever listening, ever watching, wishing, and regretting.

The young man had become very pale in the month just passed; his face no longer showed signs of youth, except by the strange fire of his eyes and the dead and smooth whiteness of his complexion; but his mouth shrivelled by dissimulation, his furtive glance, the trembling of the muscles of his face, belonged to the more sombre years of ripe age. Gilbert had recognized Philippe, as we have said; and on recognizing him, he turned to go back into the hedge-row. But Philippe rode toward him, crying out, "Gilbert! I say, Gilbert!"

Gilbert's first thought had been to fly; a second more and the vertigo of terror, and that delirium, impossible to explain, which the ancients who sought a cause for everything attributed to the god Pan, would have seized upon him and dragged him like a madman through the paths, through the shrubbery, through the hedge-rows, even into the ponds.

A word full of sweetness spoken by Philippe was fortunately heard and comprehended by the furious fellow.

"You do not recognize me, then, Gilbert?" cried Philippe to him.

Gilbert saw his folly and stopped short. Then he turned back, but slowly and defiantly. "No, Monsieur le Chevalier," said he, trembling, "no, I did not recognize

you; I had taken you for one of the guards, and as I am not at my work I had feared to be seen here, and reported for punishment."

Philippe was satisfied with the explanation, jumped to the ground, put the horse's bridle over his arm, and placing the other hand upon Gilbert's shoulder, who shuddered visibly, asked, "What is the matter with you, Gilbert?"

"Nothing, Monsieur," replied the latter.

Philippe smiled sadly. "You do not like us, Gilbert," said he.

The young man shuddered again.

"Yes, I know," continued Philippe; "my father has treated you unjustly and harshly; but I, Gilbert?"

"Oh, you —" murmured the young man.

"I have always loved you, and upheld you."

"It is true."

"So, forget the evil in the good; my sister has also been good to you."

"Oh, no, — as to that, — no," the young man replied quickly, with an incomprehensible expression; for it included an accusation against Andrée, and an excuse for himself. It flashed out like pride, while it groaned like remorse.

"Yes, yes," said Philippe, in his turn, — "yes, I know my sister is rather haughty, but she is good at heart." Then after a pause, — for all this conversation was only delaying an interview which he looked forward to with gloomy forebodings, — "Do you know where my good Andrée is at this moment, Gilbert?"

This name smote Gilbert's heart painfully; he answered, with choking voice, "At home, Monsieur, I suppose, — how should I know?"

"Alone as usual, with nothing to amuse her; poor sister!" interrupted Philippe.

"Alone at this moment, yes, Monsieur, most probably; for since the flight of Nicole —"

"What! Nicole has fled?"

"Yes, Monsieur, with her lover."

"With her lover?"

"At least, I presume so," said Gilbert, who saw that he had gone too far. "That is the common report."

"But, indeed, Gilbert," said Philippe, more and more uneasy, "I do not understand it at all. I have to drag the words from you. Be a little more agreeable. You have intelligence, and you are not wanting in natural distinction of manner; come, do not spoil these good qualities by an affected unsociableness, by a gruffness which suits neither your station in life nor any other."

"But I do not know all that you ask me, Monsieur; and when you think of it, you will see that I cannot know it. I work all day in the gardens, and how can I know what they are doing at the chateau?"

"Gilbert, Gilbert, I thought that you had eyes."

"I?"

"Yes, and that you would take an interest in all who bear my name; for however poor the hospitality of Taverney may have been, you at least shared it."

"So I do take great interest in you, Monsieur Philippe," said Gilbert, in a voice harsh and rough; for the gentleness of Philippe, and another sentiment which the latter could not divine, had softened this fierce heart. "Yes, I like you, *you*; that is why I will tell you that Mademoiselle, your sister, is very ill."

"Very ill, my sister!" Philippe burst out, — "very ill, my sister, very ill! and you did not tell me so at once!" And immediately abandoning his slow pace for a quicker one, "What is the matter with her, *mon Dieu?*" he asked.

"Indeed," said Gilbert, "nobody knows."

"But what is it?"

"Only that she has fainted three times to-day in the garden, and that, early as it is, the doctor of Madame la Dauphine has already visited her, and Monsieur le Baron also."

Philippe heard no more. His forebodings were realized; and confronted with real danger, all his courage had returned to him. He left his horse in Gilbert's hands, and went hastily toward the offices.

As for Gilbert, left alone, he quickly led the horse to the stable, and fled, like those wild or noxious birds which can never stay within range of man.

CHAPTER XLI.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

PHILIPPE found his sister lying on the little sofa of which we have already had occasion to speak.

On entering the antechamber, the young man noticed that Andrée had carefully put away all the flowers, — she who was so fond of them; for since her sickness the fragrance of the flowers had caused her unbearable pains, and she attributed to this irritation the affection of the cerebral fibres which had lasted now fifteen days.

When Philippe entered, Andrée was dreaming; her beautiful brow was clouded, and her eyes moved painfully in the sockets. Her hands were hanging down, and although in this situation the blood would naturally flow into them, they were as white as those of a wax statue. So motionless was she that she seemed lifeless, and it was necessary to hear her breathe to be sure that she was not dead.

Philippe had walked more rapidly after Gilbert had told him that his sister was sick, so that he was almost breathless when he arrived at the foot of the stairs. But there he had stopped, his reason had returned to him, and he had ascended the stairs with a calmer step; so that at the threshold of the chamber he trod as noiselessly and quietly as if he had been a sylph. He wished to examine for himself the illness by its symptoms, with the solicitude characteristic of those who love; he knew that Andrée was so tender and good, that, as soon as she had

seen him, she would assume such a conduct and demeanor as not to alarm him.

He went in, opening the glass-door so gently that Andrée did not hear him, and was in the middle of the chamber before she suspected anything.

Philippe had therefore time to look at her, to notice how pale, how motionless, how lifeless she was; he perceived the strange expression of her eyes, which were sunk in deep hollows; and more alarmed than he had thought possible, he discovered that the sufferings of his sister were in a great degree of a moral nature. At this sight, which sent a chill to his heart, he could not restrain a movement of fright.

Andrée looked up, and uttering a loud cry she stood up like a dead person come to life, and in her turn panting for breath, ran to throw her arms around her brother's neck.

"You, you, Philippe!" said she; and her strength left her before she could say anything more. Besides, what else could she say, when that was all her thought?

"Yes, yes, I," replied Philippe, embracing and supporting her, for he felt her sinking within his arms,—"I, who come back to find you sick! Ah, poor sister, what is the matter with you?"

Andrée began to laugh in a nervous way, which troubled Philippe instead of reassuring him, as the invalid had wished.

"Do you ask what is the matter with me? Do I look sick, then, Philippe?"

"Oh, yes, Andrée! you are very pale, and you tremble all over."

"But where have you seen that, brother? I am not even indisposed; who has informed you so incorrectly? Who has been so foolish as to frighten you? But indeed

I do not know what you mean; and I am remarkably well, with the exception of some slight attacks of dizziness, which will pass away as they came."

"Oh! but you are so pale, Andrée —"

"Have I, then, usually much color?"

"No; but you are alive at least, while to-day —"

"It is nothing."

"See, see! your hands, which a little while ago were burning, are now as cold as ice."

"It is very simple, Philippe; when I saw you enter —"

"Well?"

"I felt a lively sensation of joy, and the blood went to my heart, that is all."

"But you totter, Andrée; you lean upon me."

"No; I am embracing you, that is all. Do you not wish me to embrace you, Philippe?"

"Oh, dear Andrée!" and he pressed the young girl to his heart.

At that very moment Andrée felt her strength leaving her again; in vain she tried to cling to her brother's neck, her hand slipped, stiff, and almost inanimate, and she fell back on the sofa whiter than the muslin curtains upon which her charming figure was outlined.

"You see, you see that you deceive me!" cried Philippe. "Ah, dear sister, you are suffering, you are ill!"

"The flask!" murmured Andrée, forcing upon her countenance a smile which he would remember to his dying day. And her feeble glance, and hand raised with pain, pointed out to Philippe a flask on the little desk by the window.

Philippe rushed toward it, his eyes fixed on his sister whom he dreaded to leave. Then opening the window he came back and put the flask to her pinched nostrils.

"There, there," said she, inhaling in long draughts air and life, "you see that I am revived. Come, do you think I am very sick? Speak."

But Philippe did not even think of answering, he was looking at his sister. Andrée recovered gradually, sat up on the sofa, took in her moist hands Philippe's trembling hand, and her face taking on a softened expression, the blood mounting to her cheeks, she appeared more beautiful than she had ever been.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" said she; "you see, Philippe, it is over, and I am sure that but for the surprise which you gave me with such good intention, the spasms would not have returned, and I should have been well; but coming so suddenly before me, you know, Philippe (before me who love you so much), — you who are the moving power, the substance of my life, — why, that was enough to kill me, even if I had been strong."

"Yes, all that is very pleasant and very charming, Andrée; meanwhile tell me, I beg you, to what you attribute this illness?"

"How do I know, dear? To the return of spring, the season of flowers. You know how nervous I am; yesterday the odor of the Persian lilacs suffocated me. You know what an intoxicating perfume is exhaled from those magnificent plumes which sway in the early breezes of spring; well, yesterday — Oh, *mon Dieu!* Philippe, I do not wish to think of it, for I am afraid the illness will return."

"Yes, you are right, and perhaps it is that; flowers are very harmful sometimes. Do you remember that when a child at Taverney I took it into my head to surround my bed with a border of cut lilacs? It was pretty as an altar we both said; but the next day I did not wake up, you know, and everybody thought me dead except you, who would not believe that I could leave you without saying

good-by; and it was you alone, poor Andrée, — you were six years old at that time, — it was you alone who revived me with kisses and tears."

"And air, Philippe, for it is air that one needs in such a case; I seem never to have air enough."

"Ah, sister, sister! you have forgotten all about that; you have had flowers brought into your chamber!"

"No, Philippe, no indeed; for fifteen days there has not been even an Easter daisy here! What a strange thing! I who loved flowers so much, now hold them in abhorrence. But let us leave the flowers alone. Then I have had headache; Mademoiselle de Taverney has had headache, dear Philippe, and what a fortunate person this Demoiselle de Taverney is! for on account of this headache which brought on a fainting-fit, both the court and the town have become interested in her condition."

"How is that?"

"To be sure, Madame la Dauphine has been kind enough to come to see me, — oh, Philippe what a charm ing protectress and refined friend Madame la Dauphine is! She has taken care of me, nursed me, brought me her own physician, and when that grave personage, whose decrees are infallible, felt my pulse, looked at my eyes and tongue, — can you think of the latest piece of good fortune which has befallen me?"

"No."

"Well, it was proved unqualifiedly that I was not sick the least in the world; Doctor Louis did not think it necessary to order me a single potion, to prescribe me a single pill, — he who, it is said, every day cuts off arms and legs which it makes one shudder to think of. So, Philippe, you see, I am remarkably well. Now tell me who has frightened you?"

"It is that little fool of a Gilbert, *pardieu!*"

"Gilbert?" said Andrée, with a gesture of impatience.

"Yes, he told me that you were very sick."

"And you believed that little idiot, that fellow good for nothing but to do or speak evil?"

"Andrée, Andrée!"

"Well?"

"You are growing pale again."

"No, but Gilbert irritates me; it is not enough to meet him in my path, but I must hear him spoken of when he is not by."

"Come, you are going to faint again."

"Oh, yes, yes! *mon Dieu!* But it is as —" And Andrée's lips blanched, and her voice stopped.

"How strange this is!" murmured Philippe.

Andrée made an effort. "No, it is nothing," she said; "do not mind all my nervous feelings. See, I am standing up, Philippe; if you agree, we will take a walk together, and in ten minutes I shall be well."

"I think you are mistaken as to the amount of your strength, Andrée."

"No; Philippe's return would bring me health even if I were dying. Shall we go out, Philippe?"

"Presently, dear Andrée," said Philippe, gently detaining his sister. "You have not wholly reassured me; wait until you are better."

"Very well."

Andrée fell back upon the sofa, drawing after her Philippe, whose hand she held. "And why," she continued, "do you come so suddenly without sending word?"

"But answer me, dear Andrée, why did you cease writing to me?"

"It is only a few days since I wrote."

"Almost fifteen days, Andrée."

Andrée bowed her head.

"Negligent!" said Philippe, with gentle reproach.

"No, but suffering, Philippe. Well, you are right; my

illness began on the day when you ceased to hear from me. Since that day things most dear have wearied me and been distasteful to me."

"And in the midst of all this I am much pleased with what you have just said."

"What have I said?"

"You have said that you were happy; so much the better, for if you are loved and respected, it is not so with me."

"With you?"

"Yes, with me, who was entirely neglected yonder, even by my sister."

"Oh, Philippe!"

"Could you believe, my dear Andrée, that since my departure, which they told me was so urgent, I have heard nothing of that pretended regiment which they sent me to take possession of, and which the king had promised me through Monsieur de Richelieu, through my father, even?"

"Oh, that does not surprise me," said Andrée.

"What! that does not surprise you?"

"No. If you knew, Philippe! Monsieur de Richelieu and my father are unsettled in their relations with each other; they seem like two bodies without souls. I do not understand the life of such people. On a certain morning my father runs over to see his old friend, as he calls him; he sends him to Versailles to see the king; then he returns here to wait, where he occupies himself in putting to me questions I do not understand. The day passes; no news. Then Monsieur de Taverney enters in great anger. The duke drives him away, he says; the duke is a traitor. Whom does the duke betray? I ask you; for I know nothing about it, and I confess I have but little desire to understand it. Monsieur de Taverney lives like a lost soul in purgatory, expecting always something which does not happen, — some one who never comes.'

"But the king, Andrée, the king?"

"What, the king?"

"Yes, the king; so well disposed toward us."

Andrée looked timidly about her.

"What?"

"Listen! The king — let us speak low — I think I am very whimsical, Philippe. His Majesty at first seemed to be interested in me as well as in you, our father, and the family; but suddenly this interest grew cold without any apparent reason for it. The fact is, that his Majesty no longer looks at me, — he even turns his back on me, — and only yesterday, when I fainted in the garden —"

"Ah, you see, Gilbert was right; you did faint then, Andrée?"

"That miserable little Monsieur Gilbert had great need to tell you that, indeed; to tell everybody, perhaps! What concern is it of his whether I faint or not? I know very well, dear Philippe," added Andrée, smiling, "that it is not the thing to faint in a royal mansion; but in short, one does not faint for the pleasure of it, and I did not do it on purpose."

"But who blames you for it, dear sister?"

"Eh! why, the king."

"The king?"

"Yes, his Majesty was crossing the orchard on his way from Grand Trianon just at the fatal moment. I was stretched quite senseless on a bench, in the arms of good Monsieur de Jussieu, who was helping me the best he could, when the king perceived me. You know, Philippe, fainting does not take away all perception, all consciousness of what is passing around us. Well, when the king saw me, insensible as I seemed, I noticed a knitting of the eyebrows, a look of anger, and I heard some very disagreeable words which the king muttered between his teeth; then his Majesty hurried off, very much scandalized, I

suppose, that I allowed myself to be ill on his grounds. Indeed, dear Philippe, it was, however, not my fault."

"Poor dear," said Philippe, pressing affectionately the hands of the young girl, "I believe, indeed, that it was not your fault; and then?"

"That is all, my dear. And Monsieur Gilbert might have spared his remarks."

"Come, now, you are hard on the poor fellow."

"Oh, yes, assume his defence, — a charming subject!"

"Andrée, for mercy's sake, do not be so unkind toward this boy. You wound him; you treat him harshly. I have seen you doing it — Oh, my God! Andrée, what is the matter now?"

This time Andrée had fallen backward upon the sofa-cushions without uttering a word. This time the flask could not revive her; it was necessary to wait until the swoon was over, — until circulation was restored.

"Decidedly," murmured Philippe, "you are suffering, my sister, in a way to frighten persons more courageous than I am where your sufferings are concerned. You may say what you please, but it seems to me that you ought not to treat this indisposition so lightly as you do."

"But, indeed, Philippe, since the doctor has said — "

"The doctor does not convince, and will never convince me; I wish I could have spoken to him myself! Where is this doctor to be found?"

"He comes every day to Trianon."

"But at what hour every day? In the morning?"

"Morning and evening, when he is in attendance."

"Is he on duty now?"

"Yes, my dear, and at seven in the evening precisely, for he is punctual, he will ascend the flight of stairs which leads to the apartments of Madame la Dauphine."

"Well," said Philippe, more composed, "I will wait here."

CHAPTER XLII.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

PHILIPPE continued the conversation unaffectedly, meanwhile secretly observing his sister, who tried to gain command over herself so that she might not increase his anxiety by new fainting-fits.

Philippe spoke much of his disappointments, of the neglect of the king, the inconstancy of Monsieur de Richelieu. And when he heard seven o'clock strike he went out hastily, troubling himself but little to conceal from Andrée what he was about to do.

He went straight to the pavilion of the queen, and stopped at a distance sufficient to prevent his being questioned by persons in the service of the house, but so near that no one could pass without being recognized by him. In about five minutes he saw approaching him the stately and almost majestic figure of the doctor, whom Andrée had described to him. The day was declining, and in spite of the difficulty he found in reading, the worthy doctor was conning a treatise recently published at Cologne upon the causes and results of paralysis of the stomach. Darkness was gradually settling about him and the doctor was already guessing rather than reading, when a moving and opaque body shut out the last ray of light from the eyes of the learned practitioner. He looked up, saw a man in front of him, and asked, "What is the matter?"

"Pardon, Monsieur!" said Philippe; "have I the honor of speaking to Monsieur le Docteur Louis?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the doctor, shutting his book.

"Then a word with you, Monsieur, if you please!" said Philippe.

"Monsieur, excuse me! It is the hour for my visit to Madame la Dauphine, and I must not delay."

"Monsieur," and Philippe, with a gesture of entreaty, placed himself in the doctor's way, — "Monsieur, the person for whom I ask your aid is in the service of Madame la Dauphine. She is very ill, while Madame la Dauphine is not ill at all."

"In the first place, of whom are you speaking?" asked the doctor.

"Of a person to whom you have been introduced by Madame la Dauphine herself."

"Ah, ah! it might perhaps be Mademoiselle de Taverney?"

"Precisely, Monsieur."

"Ah, ah!" said the doctor, looking up quickly to observe the young man.

"You know, then, that she is very sick?"

"Yes; spasms, is it not?"

"Continual swoons, — yes, Monsieur. To-day, in the space of a few hours, she has fainted three or four times in my arms."

"Is the young lady worse?"

"Alas! I do not know; but you understand, Doctor, when one loves — "

"Do you love Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney?"

"Oh, more than my life, Doctor!" Philippe pronounced these words with such exaltation of fraternal love, that Doctor Louis mistook their meaning.

"Ah, ah!" said he, "it is you, then — " The doctor hesitated.

"What do you mean, Monsieur?" asked Philippe.

"It is you, then, who are —"

"Who am what, Monsieur?"

"Eh, *parbleu!* who are her lover?" said the doctor, impatiently.

Philippe took two steps backward, putting his hand to his brow, and becoming pale as death. "Monsieur," he said, "take care; you insult my sister!"

"Your sister! is Mademoiselle your sister?"

"Yes, Monsieur; and I did not think I had said anything to give rise, on your part, to such a misunderstanding."

"Excuse me, Monsieur! the hour at which you accost me, the air of mystery with which you spoke, — I have thought, I have supposed, that an interest more tender even than that of a brother —"

"Oh, Monsieur! neither lover nor husband will ever love my sister with a more profound love than mine."

"Very well, in that case I understand that my supposition may have wounded you, and I offer you an apology. Will you allow me, Monsieur?" and the doctor made a movement to go on.

"Doctor," insisted Philippe, "I beg of you, do not leave me without having reassured me as to the condition of my sister."

"But what has made you anxious about her condition?"

"Eh, *mon Dieu!* what I have seen."

"You have seen symptoms which indicate an indisposition —"

"Grave, Doctor!"

"That depends upon circumstances."

"Listen, Doctor! there is in all this something strange; it would seem that you will not, that you dare not, answer me."

"Suppose rather, Monsieur, that in my impatience to go to Madame la Dauphine, who is expecting me — "

"Doctor, Doctor!" said Philippe, passing his hand over his streaming brow, "you have taken me for the lover of Mademoiselle de Taverney?"

"Yes; but you have undeceived me."

"You think, then, that Mademoiselle de Taverney has a lover?"

"Pardon, Monsieur! I am not accountable to you for my thoughts."

"Doctor, have pity on me! Doctor, you have let fall a word which sticks in my heart like the broken blade of a poniard. Doctor, do not try to put me off; as you are a gentleman and a skilful doctor, what is that malady which you could explain to a lover, and which you wish to conceal from a brother? Doctor, I entreat you to answer me!"

"I will ask you, on the contrary, to excuse me from answering you, Monsieur; for by the way in which you question me, I see that you are not master of yourself."

"Oh, my God! you do not know, then, Monsieur, how each one of your words drives me toward that abyss, — the thought of which makes me shudder."

"Monsieur!"

"Doctor!" cried Philippe, with added vehemence, "you have as much as said that you have a terrible secret to disclose to me, to hear which I need all my composure and all my courage."

"But I do not know what supposition is misleading you. I have said nothing of the kind."

"Oh, you do a hundred times more than say! You let me think things. Oh, it is not kindness, Doctor; you see how my heart is consuming before you; you see how I beg, how I entreat. Speak, speak! See, I swear to

you, I am composed, I have courage — This sickness, this dishonor perhaps — Oh, my God! you do not contradict me, Doctor, Doctor!"

"Monsieur de Taverney, I have said nothing, neither to Madame la Dauphine, nor to your father, nor to you. Do not ask me anything more."

"Yes, yes; but you see how I interpret your silence. You see how I follow your thought into the dark and fatal road into which it plunges; stop me, at least, if I wander."

"Adieu, Monsieur," replied the doctor, sharply.

"Oh, you will not leave me without saying yes or no? One word, only one, — it is all I ask."

The doctor stopped. "Monsieur," he said, "just now — and that brings us back to the fatal mistake which has wounded you —"

"Do not let us speak of that, Monsieur."

"On the contrary, we will speak of it. Just now — a little late, perhaps — you told me that Mademoiselle de Taverney was your sister; but previously, with an exaltation which caused my error, you had told me that you loved Mademoiselle Andrée more than your life."

"It is true."

"If your love for her is so great, she must love you in return?"

"Oh, Monsieur! Andrée loves me better than she loves any one else."

"Well, then, return to her, question her, Monsieur, — question her on that mystery in which I am obliged to leave you; and if she loves you as you love her, why she will answer your questions. There are many things one will say to a friend which one will not say to a physician; then, perhaps, she will consent to tell you that of which I would not give you even a hint to save a finger of my

right hand. Adieu, Monsieur;" and the doctor turned again toward the pavilion.

"Oh, no, no, it is impossible!" cried Philippe, mad with grief, and sobbing at every word; "no, Doctor, I have misunderstood, — you cannot have said that!"

The doctor quietly moved away. Then, with a gentleness full of commiseration, "Do as I have just advised you, Monsieur de Taverney," he said, "and believe me, it is the best thing for you to do."

"Oh, but think of it! To believe you is to renounce the religion of my whole life; it is to accuse an angel, it is to tempt God, Doctor. If you require me to believe it, prove it, at least prove it!"

"Adieu, Monsieur."

"Doctor!" cried Philippe, in despair.

"Take care, if you speak so violently you will make known what I had determined to hide from the world, and had wished to conceal from yourself."

"Yes, yes; you are right, Doctor," said Philippe, in a tone so low that the words died on his lips; "but, indeed, science can make mistakes, and you will confess that you yourself are sometimes mistaken."

"Rarely, Monsieur," replied the doctor; "I am a man of hard study, and my lips never affirm until my eyes and my mind have said, 'I have seen, I know, I am sure.' Yes, certainly, you are right, Monsieur; sometimes I am mistaken, like every fallible creature; but according to all probability, it is not the case now. Come, be calm and let us part."

But Philippe could not be resigned. He put his hand upon the doctor's arm with such an air of entreaty that the latter stopped. "One last, one supreme favor, Monsieur," he said; "you see how agitated I am; I feel something which resembles madness; to know whether I

am going to live or die I need confirmation of that reality which threatens me. I am going to my sister; I will not speak to her until you shall have seen her again; consider."

"It is for you to consider, Monsieur; for I have not a word to add to what I have said."

"Monsieur, promise me, — my God! it is a favor that the executioner would not refuse his victim, — promise me to see my sister again after your visit to her Highness Madame la Dauphine; Doctor, in the name of Heaven promise me that!"

"It is useless, Monsieur; but if you insist, it is my duty to do what you desire. On leaving Madame la Dauphine, I will go to see your sister."

"Oh, thanks, thanks! Yes, come, and then you will confess that you have been mistaken."

"I hope so with all my heart, Monsieur; and if I am mistaken, I will confess it joyfully. Adieu." And the doctor, restored to freedom, went away, leaving Philippe upon the esplanade, shaking with fever, covered with cold perspiration, and in his delirium conscious neither of the place where he was nor of the man with whom he had been talking, nor of the secret which he had just learned. For some minutes he gazed without intelligence at the sky, gradually illumined by stars, and at the pavilion, in which lights appeared.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AN INVESTIGATION.

As soon as Philippe had recovered his senses and succeeded in gaining control over his reason, he directed his steps toward the apartment of Andrée. Indeed, as he approached the pavilion the phantom of his unhappiness gradually vanished; it seemed to him a dream and not a reality against which he had for a moment struggled. The farther he went from the doctor the less he believed in his threatening intimations. Surely science was mistaken, and virtue had not failed. Had not the doctor completely justified his incredulity in promising to come to see his sister?

Nevertheless, when Philippe came into Andrée's presence he was so changed, so pale, so haggard, that she was anxious in her turn to know how so terrible a change could have taken place in him in so short a time. One thing alone could have produced such an effect on Philippe. "Good Heavens! brother," she said, "I am then very ill?"

"Why do you ask?" said Philippe.

"Because the consultation with Doctor Louis has frightened you."

"No, sister," said Philippe; "the doctor is not anxious, and you told me the truth. I could hardly induce him to come again."

"Ah, is he coming again?"

"Yes; that does not vex you, Andrée?" and Philippe, saying this, gazed into the eyes of the young girl.

"No," she replied simply, "and if it reassures you, that is all I ask; but meanwhile tell me, whence comes this frightful paleness which troubles me?"

"Does that disturb you, Andrée?"

"You ask that!"

"You love me, then, tenderly, Andrée?"

"What did you say?" said the young girl.

"I ask, Andrée, if you love me as well now as in our childhood?"

"Oh, Philippe, Philippe!"

"So I am one of the dearest friends you have on earth?"

"Oh, the dearest, the only one!" cried Andrée. Then, blushing and confused, "Excuse me, Philippe," she said, "I forgot —"

"Our father, is it not Andrée?"

"Yes."

Philippe took his sister's hand and looking at her ten derly, said, "Andrée, do not think that I should blame you if your heart held still another affection than the love you have for my father, or that you feel for me." Then sitting down by her, he continued, "You are at an age, Andrée, when the hearts of young girls are stirred more deeply than they themselves wish, and, you know, a divine precept commands women to leave parents and family to follow their husband."

Andrée looked at Philippe for some time as if he had spoken a strange language which she did not understand. Then beginning to laugh, with a simplicity nothing could describe. "My husband!" she said, "did you not say 'husband,' Philippe? Eh, *mon Dieu!* he is yet unborn, or at least, I do not know him."

Philippe touched by this exclamation of Andrée, evidently so sincere, approached her, and taking her hand

between his own he answered, "Before having a husband, my good Andrée, one must have a lover."

Andrée looked at Philippe in amazement, permitting him to gaze into the very depths of her clear, pure eyes in which her whole soul was reflected.

"My sister," said Philippe, "since your birth I have been your best friend, as you have been my only one; I never left you, to go to play with my comrades. We have grown up together, and nothing has disturbed the perfect confidence we placed in each other; why is it that for some time, Andrée, and without apparent reason, you have been so changed toward me?"

"Changed, I! I changed toward you, Philippe? Explain yourself. Indeed, I understand nothing you have said to me since you came in."

"Yes, Andrée," said the young man, pressing her to his breast; "yes, my sweet sister, the passions of youth have succeeded to the affections of childhood, and now that you are in love I am no longer worthy of your confidence."

"My brother, my friend," said Andrée, more and more astonished, "why do you say that? Why do you speak of love to me?"

"Andrée, I come courageously to a question full of dangers for you, full of anguish for me. I know very well that in asking or rather demanding your confidence at this time, I fall in your esteem; but I would rather — and believe me, it is a hard thing to say — I would rather feel that you love me less, than leave you a prey to the misfortunes which threaten you, — terrible misfortunes, Andrée, if you persist in the silence which I deplore, and of which I could not have thought you capable toward a friend, a brother."

"My brother, my friend," said Andrée, "I swear to you I do not understand your reproaches."

"Andrée, do you wish me to make you understand them?"

"Oh, yes; certainly, yes."

"Well, then, if, encouraged by you, I speak too plainly, if I call the color to your brow, and shame to weigh heavily upon your heart, blame only yourself, who have driven me by unjust distrust to search your soul to its very depths that I may tear your secret from it."

"Do so, Philippe, and I assure you that I shall not be offended."

Philippe looked at his sister, then arose and strode about the floor in great agitation. The composure of the young girl contradicted so strangely the charge against her he had made in his own mind, that he did not know what to think.

Andrée on her part contemplated her brother with astonishment, and became chilled in contact with this solemnity, so different from the sweet fraternal authority.

So, before Philippe had recovered speech, Andrée arose in her turn and went to her brother, putting her arm in his. Then looking at him with an unspeakable tenderness, she said, "Listen, Philippe, look at me as I look at you!"

"Oh, I ask nothing better," the young man replied, fixing upon her his burning eyes; "what do you wish to say to me?"

"I wish to say to you, Philippe, that you have always been a little jealous of my friendship; that is natural, since I also have been jealous of your care and affection; well, look at me as I told you to." The young girl smiled. "Do you see a secret in my eyes?" she said.

"Yes, yes, I see one," said Philippe; "Andrée, you love some one."

"I?" cried the young girl, with an expression of aston-

ishment so natural that the most skilful actress could not have imitated the accent of that utterance. And she began to laugh; "I love some one?" she said.

"Some one loves you, then?"

"Upon my word, so much the worse; for as that unknown person has never become acquainted with me and consequently has not declared himself, it is a dead waste of love."

Then, seeing his sister laugh and jest upon this question so frankly, observing the limpid blue of her eyes, the pure frankness of her demeanor, Philippe, who felt Andrée's heart beating against his with so steady a motion, said to himself that a month's absence could not make such a change in the character of an irreproachable young girl; that poor Andrée was suspected unjustly; that science lied. He confessed that there was some excuse for Doctor Louis, who did not know Andrée's purity and exquisite instincts; who thought her like all those girls of noble rank, who, fascinated by unworthy examples, or carried away by the excessive ardor of corrupted blood, surrender themselves without regret, or even without ambition.

A last glance at Andrée persuaded Philippe of the doctor's error; and he was so happy in this conviction, that he embraced his sister like those martyrs who confessed the purity of the Virgin Mary, confessing at the same time their belief in her divine Son.

While in the midst of these changes of feeling Philippe heard on the stairs the step of Doctor Louis, faithful to his promise. Andrée trembled; in her situation, everything was an event. "Who is coming?" she asked.

"Doctor Louis, probably," said Philippe.

At the same moment the door opened, and the doctor, expected so anxiously by Philippe, entered the room. He was, as we have said, one of those grave and honorable

men to whom science is a priesthood, and who study its mysteries religiously. Doctor Louis sought to discover the diseases of the soul beneath the diseases of the body, — which was an unusual thing at this very materialistic period. He went on his way boldly, gruffly, paying little attention to rumors and obstacles, economizing his time, that patrimony of laboring men, with an avarice which made him rude toward the idle and garrulous. It was for this reason that he had answered Philippe so roughly at their first interview. He had taken him for one of those fops of the court who come to fawn upon the doctor in order to procure congratulations upon their feats of prowess in love, and who are very proud of having a secret to pay for. But as soon as the medallion was turned, and instead of the fop, more or less amorous, the doctor had seen the dark, threatening face of the brother; as soon as in the place of an offence he had seen a misfortune, — the philosophic practitioner, the man of heart, was moved, and after the last words of Philippe, the doctor had said to himself, "Not only may I have been mistaken, but I sincerely wish I may be." That is the reason why even without the urgent entreaty of Philippe, he would have come to see Andrée, to satisfy himself by a more decisive examination that his first opinion had been correct. He came in, and his first glance, that "taking possession" of the doctor and the observer, was fastened upon Andrée as he entered the antechamber, and he continued to observe her closely. Immediately, either by reason of the excitement caused by the doctor's visit, or by natural accident, Andrée was seized with one of those attacks which had frightened Philippe, and she tottered, putting her handkerchief to her lips with an expression of pain. Philippe, engaged in receiving the doctor, had not seen it. "Doctor," he said, "you are welcome. Pardon the somewhat unceremonious manner in which I addressed you, when I ac-

costed you an hour ago; I was as agitated as I am now calm."

The doctor ceased looking at Andrée for a moment, and his observation fell upon the young man, whose smile and effusiveness he tried to comprehend.

"You have talked with Mademoiselle, your sister, as I advised you?" he asked.

"Yes, Doctor, yes."

"And you are reassured?"

"I have more of heaven and less of hell in my heart."

The doctor took Andrée's hand and felt her pulse a long time.

Philippe looked on as if to say, "Oh, go on, Doctor; I dread no longer the physician's diagnosis.—Well, Monsieur?" he said, with an air of triumph.

"Monsieur le Chevalier," replied Doctor Louis, "will you leave me alone with your sister?" These words, simply pronounced, shook the young man's confidence. "What! do you still wish it?" he said.

The doctor made an affirmative gesture.

"Very well, I will leave you, Monsieur," replied Philippe, with a serious air. Then to his sister, "Andrée," he continued, "be frank and straightforward with the doctor." The young girl shrugged her shoulders as if she could not understand what he meant. Philippe continued, "While he is talking to you about your health I will take a turn in the park. The hour for which I ordered my horse has not arrived, so that I shall be able to see you again before my departure and to have a moment's conversation with you." And he pressed Andrée's hand, trying to smile. But to the young girl the pressure and the smile seemed constrained and convulsive. The doctor accompanied Philippe to the door, which he closed after him. Then he sat down on the same sofa with Andrée,

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE CONSULTATION.

THE most profound silence reigned without. Not a breath of wind was stirring; not a human voice could be heard, — all Nature was still.

Andrée, in the depths of her heart, was considerably disturbed to see the importance which Philippe and the doctor attributed to this disease. She was rather surprised at the return of Doctor Louis, who that very morning had declared her illness insignificant, and remedies useless; but thanks to her deep purity, the resplendent mirror of the soul was not even dulled by the breath of all these different suspicions.

Suddenly the doctor, who had not ceased looking at her, after having turned upon her the full light of the lamp, took her hand like a friend or a confessor, no longer trying the pulse like a doctor. This unexpected movement surprised the susceptible Andrée; she came near drawing away her hand.

"Mademoiselle," asked the doctor, "did you wish to see me, or have I acceded only to the desire of your brother in coming again to see you?"

"Monsieur," replied Andrée, "my brother, on his return, informed me that you would come again to see me; but since you had done me the honor this morning to speak so lightly of my illness, I should not have taken the liberty to trouble you again."

The doctor bowed. "Monsieur, your brother," he replied, "seems very passionate, jealous of his honor and

unreasonable in some matters; that is probably the reason why you have declined to open your heart to him."

Andrée looked at the doctor as she had looked at Philippe. "You too, Monsieur?" she said, with a supreme haughtiness.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle, let me finish."

Andrée made a gesture of impatience, or rather of resignation.

"It is, then, natural," continued the doctor, "that, seeing the sorrow and dreading the anger of this young man, you have obstinately kept your secret; but with me, Mademoiselle, — with me, who am, you may well believe, the doctor of souls as well as of bodies; with me, who see and who know; with me, who, consequently, meet you half-way on the difficult road of confession, — with me, I have the right to expect that you will be more frank."

"Monsieur," replied Andrée, "if I had not seen my brother's face grow sad and take on the expression of a real sorrow; if I did not consider your grave appearance and the reputation for seriousness which you enjoy, — I should think that you were putting your heads together to play a comedy at my expense, and to make me take, after a consultation, through the fear which you would have caused me, some very black and bitter medicine."

The doctor frowned. "Mademoiselle," he said, "I beg you, stop short in this course of dissimulation."

"Dissimulation!" cried Andrée.

"Would you prefer to have me call it hypocrisy?"

"But, Monsieur," cried the young girl, "you insult me!"

"Say that I understand you."

"Monsieur!" Andrée rose, but the doctor forced her gently, to sit down again.

"No," he continued, "no, my child, I do not insult

you, — I serve you; and if I convince you, I save you! So neither your expression of anger nor your pretended indignation will change my resolution."

"But what do you wish? What do you demand?"

"Confess, or, upon my honor, I shall have a very bad opinion of you."

"Monsieur, once more, my brother is not here to defend me, and I say that you insult me, that I do not understand, and that I demand a clear and complete explanation in regard to this pretended disease."

"For the last time, Mademoiselle," replied the astonished doctor, "will you not spare me the pain of making you blush?"

"I do not understand! I do not understand! I do not understand!" Andrée exclaimed three times, with flashing eyes, which questioned, defied, and almost threatened.

"Well, I understand about you, Mademoiselle; you doubt science, and you hope to conceal your condition from the world. But, be undeceived, with one single word I will humble all your pride, — you are enceinte!"

Andrée uttered a terrible cry, and fell back on the sofa. This cry was followed by the sound of a door opened with violence, and Philippe bounded into the middle of the room, sword in hand, with blood-shot eyes and trembling lips. "Scoundrel!" he said to the doctor, "you lie!"

The doctor turned slowly toward the young man without letting go the scarcely beating pulse of Andrée. "I have said what I have said, Monsieur," he replied, "and the fear of your sword, naked or sheathed, will not make me say what is not true."

"Doctor!" murmured Philippe, letting his sword fall.

"You wished me to verify by a second trial my first examination; I have done so. Now that certainty is established, nothing can destroy my faith in it. I regret it

extremely, young man; for you have inspired me as much with sympathy as this young girl has inspired me with aversion, through her persistence in falsehood."

Philippe started, but Andrée was motionless.

"I am a family man, Monsieur," continued the doctor, "and I understand how much you must suffer. I offer you my services, then, and I promise secrecy. My word is sacred, Monsieur, and everybody will tell you that I think more of my word than of my life."

"Oh! but, Monsieur, it is impossible!"

"I do not know whether it is impossible; but it is true. Adieu, Monsieur de Taverney." And the doctor turned away with the same steady and slow step, looking affectionately at the young man, who was writhing with pain, and who, as soon as the door was shut, sank overcome with grief into a chair two steps from Andrée.

The doctor having gone, Philippe arose, shut the doors of the corridor and of the chamber, closed the windows, and approaching Andrée, who was astonished to see him making these inauspicious preparations, "You have deceived me in a stupid and cowardly manner," he said, folding his arms, — "cowardly, because I am your brother, because I was so weak as to love you, to prefer you to all, to esteem you above all, and because this confidence on my part ought at least to call forth your own, even if affection could not inspire it; stupidly, because now the infamous secret which dishonors us is in the power of a third person; because in spite of your secrecy it may have been seen by others; because, in short, if you had confessed your situation to me at first, I might have saved you from shame, if not through affection for you, at least for my own sake; for indeed I should save myself in saving you. See, now, the full measure of your guilt. Your honor, so long as you are not married, is shared by

all those whose name you bear, — that is to say, whose name you soil. Now, then, I am no longer your brother, since you have denied me that right; now, I am a man interested in wresting from you by all possible means the whole secret, so that from this confession may spring forth for myself some reparation. I come, then, to you full of anger and resolution, and I say to you, Since you have been coward enough to trust in a lie, you will be punished as cowards are punished. Confess, then, your crime, or —."

"Threats!" cried the proud Andrée, — "threats to a woman!" and she arose pale and threatening herself.

"Yes, threats, — not to a woman, but to a creature without honesty, without honor."

"Threats!" continued Andrée, gradually becoming exasperated, — "threats to me, who know nothing, who understand nothing, who regard you all as bloodthirsty lunatics, conspiring together to kill me with grief, if not with shame!"

"Well, yes!" cried Philippe; "die, then! die, then, unless you confess, — die this instant! God judges you, and I will strike you;" and the young man took up, convulsively, his sword, and quick as lightning placed the point at his sister's breast.

"Well, well, kill me!" she cried, without showing fear of the light which flashed from the blade, without trying to avoid the pain of the wound; and she threw herself forward, full of grief and madness, and her movement was so quick that the sword would have pierced her breast if it had not been for the sudden terror of Philippe, and the sight of drops of blood which stained the muslin thrown around his sister's neck. The young man had lost his strength and his anger; he started back, dropped his sword, and falling on his knees, sobbing, he put his arms around the body of the young girl.

"Andrée! Andrée!" he cried, "no, no! it is I who will die! You love me no longer, you know me no more; I have nothing more to do in this world. Oh, you love some one so much, Andrée, that you prefer death to confiding in me! Oh, Andrée, you shall not die! it is I who will die;" and he attempted to escape, but already Andrée had put both arms about his neck, beside herself, covering him with kisses, bathing him with tears.

"No, no," she said; "you were right at first. Kill me, Philippe, for they say that I am guilty. But you, so noble, so pure, so good, — you whom no one accuses, live and pity me instead of cursing me."

"Well, sister," replied the young man, "in the name of Heaven, in the name of our former friendship, come, fear nothing, neither for yourself nor for him whom you love; he, whoever he may be, shall be sacred to me, were he my greatest enemy, were he the vilest of men. But I have no enemy, Andrée; and you are so noble in heart and thought that your lover must be well chosen. Well; I will go to find him, I will call him brother. You say nothing; do you mean that marriage between you and him is impossible? Well, so be it! I will be resigned; I will keep all my grief to myself; I will stifle this imperious voice of honor which demands blood. I ask you nothing, not even the name of this man. You have loved this man, therefore he is dear to me — Only, let us leave France, let us go together. The king has given you a valuable present, they say; well, we will sell it; we will send half of the money to our father; then with the other half we will live unknown. I will be all to you, Andrée; you shall be all to me. I love no one; you see that I am devoted to you, Andrée; you see what I am doing; you see that you can rely on my friendship, — come, will you refuse me still your confidence, after what I have just said to you? Come, come, will you not call me your brother?"

Andrée had listened in silence to what the distracted young man had said. The beating of her heart alone gave sign of life; her look alone indicated reason.

"Philippe," she said, after a long silence, "you thought that I loved you no longer, poor brother! you thought that I loved another man; you thought that I had forgotten the law of honor, — I, who am a girl of noble birth, and who understand all the duties that word imposes upon me! My dear, I forgive you. Yes, yes; in vain have you believed me base; in vain have you called me cowardly. Yes, yes, I forgive you; but I will not forgive you if you believe me so impious, so vile as to swear falsely to you. I swear to you, Philippe, by the God who hears me, by the soul of my mother, — which has not sufficiently protected me, alas! as it would seem, — I swear to you by my ardent love for you, that never a thought of love has distracted my reason; that never has a man said to me, 'I love you;' that never have lips kissed my hand; that I am pure in mind, virgin in desire as on the day of my birth. Now, Philippe, God has my soul, take you my body in your hands."

"It is well," said Philippe, after a long silence, — "it is well, Andrée, I thank you. Now I see clearly into the very depths of your heart. Yes, you are pure, innocent, dear victim; but there are magic drinks, poisoned philtres; some one has set for you an infamous trap; some one has taken from you in your sleep that which living no one could have torn from you but with your life. You have fallen into some snare, Andrée; but now we are united, consequently we are strong. You trust to me the care of your honor and of your vengeance, do you not?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" said Andrée, quickly, with bitter emphasis; "yes, for if you avenge me it will be for a crime."

"Well," continued Philippe, "aid me, support me.

Let us search together; let us go back hour by hour over the past days; let us follow the helpful thread of memory, and at the first clew — "

"Oh, I wish it! I wish it!" said Andrée; "let us search."

"Well, have you noticed any one following you, watching you?"

"No."

"No one has written to you?"

"No one."

"No man has told you he loved you?"

"No one."

"Women have a remarkable instinct in this respect; have you ever noticed that any one — desired you?"

"I have never noticed anything of the kind."

"Dear sister, search the circumstances of your life, its inmost details."

"Lead me."

"Have you walked out alone?"

"Never, that I can remember, except to go to see Madame la Dauphine."

"When you went off into the park, into the woods?"

"Nicole always accompanied me."

"Speaking of Nicole, she has left you?"

"Yes."

"On what day?"

"The very day of your departure, I think."

"She was a girl of questionable conduct; do you know the particulars of her flight? Think carefully."

"I only know that she went off with her lover."

"What were your last relations with that girl?"

"Oh, at nine o'clock, she came as usual into my chamber, undressed me, prepared my glass of water, and went out."

"You did not notice whether she mixed any cordial with the water?"

"No; besides, that circumstance would have had no importance, for I remember that at the moment when I lifted the glass to my lips, I experienced a very strange sensation."

"What was it like?"

"Like that I experienced one day at Taverney."

"At Taverney?"

"Yes, when that stranger was passing by."

"What stranger?"

"Comte de Balsamo."

"Comte de Balsamo? And what was this sensation?"

"Oh, something like vertigo, like dizziness; then the loss of all my faculties."

"And you felt this impression at Taverney, you say?"

"Yes."

"Under what circumstances?"

"I was at my piano; I felt myself fainting; I looked before me and saw the count in a mirror. From that moment I remember nothing more, except that when I awoke I was still at the piano, and could not judge of the length of my sleep."

"It is the only time, you say, that you experienced this singular sensation?"

"Once more, on the day or rather the night of the fireworks. I was dragged along by all that crowd, upon the point of being crushed, destroyed; I collected all my strength for the struggle; all at once my arms relaxed, a cloud enveloped my eyes, but through this cloud I had yet time to see this very man."

"The Comte de Balsamo?"

"Yes."

"And you went to sleep?"

"I went to sleep or fainted, I cannot tell which. You know how he carried me away, and brought me back to my father."

"Yes, yes; and that night, — the night that Nicole went away, — did you see him then?"

"No; but I experienced all the symptoms which gave notice of his presence, — the same strange sensations, the same nervous dizziness, the same torpor, the same sleep."

"The same sleep?"

"Yes, sleep full of vertigos, of which, even while struggling against them, I recognized the mysterious source before yielding to them."

"Great God!" cried Philippe, "go on, go on!"

"I went to sleep."

"Where did you go to sleep?"

"On my own bed, I am very sure; and I awoke upon the floor, alone, ill, and cold, like a dead person reviving. I called Nicole, but in vain; Nicole had disappeared."

"And this sleep was the very same?"

"Yes."

"The same as at Taverney? the same as on the day of the fêtes?"

"Yes, yes."

"On the first two occasions, just before yielding, you had seen this Joseph Balsamo, this Comte de Fenix?"

"Certainly."

"And the third time you did not see him?"

"No," said Andrée, in terror, for she was beginning to understand; "no, but I felt his presence."

"Good!" cried Philippe; "now be calm, be reassured, be proud, Andrée; I know the secret. Thanks, dear sister, thanks. Ah, we are saved!"

Philippe took Andrée in his arms, pressed her tenderly to his heart, and carried away by the ardor of resolution, he rushed out of the chamber. He ran to the stables, saddled his horse himself, mounted, and took in great haste the road to Paris.

CHAPTER XLV.

GILBERT'S CONSCIENCE.

All the scenes we have just described had reacted powerfully upon Gilbert. The unbalanced susceptibility of this young man was subjected to too severe a trial when, in the depths of the retreat which he knew how to choose in some corner of the garden, he saw every day the progress of the disease on the face and in the step of Andrée; when this paleness, which had alarmed him the evening before, seemed next morning more marked, more accusing, when Mademoiselle de Taverney came to the window to get the first rays of the morning sun. Then whoever had observed Gilbert's countenance would not have failed to see in it the characteristic traits of that remorse which was so favorite a subject among the painters of antiquity.

Gilbert loved the beauty of Andrée, and on the other hand he detested it. This brilliant beauty, together with so many other superior qualities, established a new barrier between him and the young girl; nevertheless this beauty seemed to him a new treasure to acquire. Such were the reasons for his love and his hatred, for his desire and his scorn.

But from the time this beauty was sullied, when the features of Andrée became a revelation of suffering, or of shame, from the time when there was danger for Andrée, danger for Gilbert, the situation was wholly changed; and Gilbert, who was eminently just, changed also his point of view. We may say that his first feeling was one of

profound sadness. He did not see without pain the beauty of his mistress fading, her health failing. He experienced the delicious pride of pitying this haughty woman, so scornful of him, and of rewarding her with compassion for all the opprobrium with which she had loaded him. But we do not on this account make excuses for Gilbert; pride justifies nothing. But pride was not the only sentiment in Gilbert's heart as he confronted the situation. Every time that Mademoiselle de Taverney, pale, suffering, and sad, appeared like a phantom before the eyes of Gilbert, his heart leaped, the blood rushed to his eyelids like tears, and he pressed to his breast a clinched, restless hand, which tried to restrain the revolt of his conscience.

"It is through me that she is ruined," he murmured. And devouring her with a furious look, he fled, imagining all the time that he could see her, and hear her groan. Then he was stricken to the heart; he experienced one of the most poignant griefs that it is given man to endure. His furious love needed consolation, and he would have given his life for the right to fall on his knees before Andrée, to take her by the hand, to console her, to recall her to life when she fainted. His powerlessness on these occasions was a punishment, the tortures of which no words could describe. Gilbert bore this martyrdom three days. On the first day he had noticed the change, the slow working of the disease on Andrée. Where others saw nothing more, he, the cause, could divine and interpret everything. More than this, he had studied the course of the disease, and could calculate the exact time of the crisis.

The day of Andrée's faintings he spent in frights, in agitations, in wild wanderings, — certain indications of a conscience at bay. All this running to and fro, these airs of indifference or of eagerness, these bursts of sympathy or

sarcasm which Gilbert considered as master-pieces of dissimulation and manœuvring, any clerk of the Châtelet, any turnkey of Saint Lazare, would have analyzed and interpreted them as the ferret of Monsieur de Sartines could read and write cipher. One does not see a man run until out of breath, then suddenly stop, utter inarticulate sounds, then plunge all at once into the deepest silence, — one does not see him listening in the air for indifferent sounds, or dig the ground, or hack the trees in rage, without thinking of him, "This man is mad if he is not a culprit."

After this first outpouring of remorse, Gilbert had passed from commiseration to egotism. He knew that these frequent fainting fits of Andrée would not seem to be a natural sickness, and that the cause of them would be sought for. Gilbert called to mind the brutal and expeditious forms of justice which investigate all kinds of crime which can dishonor a man, — the questions, the examinations, the analogies unknown to the rest of the world, and which put on the track of a criminal those blood-hounds, full of resources, called "instructors." Now that which Gilbert had done seemed to him morally most odious and deserving of punishment. He began to tremble in earnest; for he feared that the sickness of Andrée would instigate inquiry. From this time, like the criminal in that celebrated picture pursued by the angel of remorse by the pale light of his torch, Gilbert cast frightened looks upon everything about him. He was suspicious; every sound and every whisper, every word he heard spoken, however insignificant, seemed to have some relation to Mademoiselle de Taverney or to himself.

He had seen Monsieur de Richelieu go to see the king, and Monsieur de Taverney go to visit his daughter. The

house had seemed on that day to take on an extraordinary air of conspiracy and suspicion. It was still worse when he saw the doctor and the dauphiness repair to the chamber of Andrée. Gilbert was one of those sceptics who believe in nothing. He cared but little for God or man; but he recognized science as God, and proclaimed its omnipotence. There were times when Gilbert would have denied the infallible knowledge of the Supreme Being; he never doubted the clear-sightedness of the doctor. The visit of Doctor Louis to Andrée was a blow from which Gilbert's mind could not recover. He ran to his chamber, leaving his work, and deaf as a statue to the injunctions of his superiors. There, behind the poor curtain which he had improvised to conceal his spyings, he addressed all his faculties to the endeavor to discover a word or movement which would reveal the result of the consultation. Nothing happened which would enlighten him. Only once he saw the face of the dauphiness, who came to the window to take a look at the court, which she had probably never seen. He could also see Doctor Louis opening this window to let into the chamber a little fresh air. As for hearing what was said, or seeing the expression of their faces, that was not possible; a thick curtain, which served as a blind, fell the whole length of the window, and prevented all knowledge of what was going on.

The anguish of the young man may be conceived. The doctor, with the eye of a lynx, had solved the mystery. Disclosure must follow, not immediately, as Gilbert justly supposed, on account of the presence of the dauphiness, but very soon between the father and daughter when the two visitors should leave them alone. Gilbert, wild with grief and impatience, beat his head against the walls of his garret. He saw Monsieur de Taverney go out with Madame la Dauphine, the doctor having already left.

"The explanation will take place between Monsieur de Taverney and the dauphiness," he said to himself.

The baron did not return to his daughter; Andrée remained alone in her room, and spent the time upon her sofa, partly in reading, interrupted by spasms and headaches, partly in meditations so deep and quiet that Gilbert took them for trances, when he caught a glimpse of her through an opening in the curtain which the wind occasionally blew aside.

Andrée, worn out with pain and emotion, went to sleep. Gilbert profited by this respite to go out of doors to gather rumors and comments. This time was precious to him, because it gave him opportunity for reflection. The danger was so imminent that he must combat it by a sudden, heroic resolution. This was the first point of support upon which this mind, vacillating because subtle, found strength and tranquillity. But what resolution to take? Any change, in such circumstances, would attract attention. Flight? Ah, yes! flight, with that energy of youth, that vigor of despair and of fear, which doubles the strength of a man and renders it equal to that of an army, — hide by day, travel by night, and arrive at length — where? In what place could he hide where the avenging arm of justice could not find him?

Gilbert knew the customs of the country. What would they think in countries almost savage, almost deserted, — for as to cities he must not think of them, — what would they think in a small town, a hamlet, of the stranger who comes some day to beg his bread, or whom they suspect of stealing it? And then Gilbert knew himself by heart, — a noticeable face, a face which henceforth would bear the indelible impress of a terrible secret, would attract the attention of every observer. To fly was already a danger; but to be discovered was a disgrace.

Flight would condemn him; he rejected this idea, and as if his mind had strength for only one idea, the unhappy man, after dismissing the idea of flight, entertained that of death. It was the first time he had thought of it; the apparition of this lugubrious phantom he had evoked occasioned him no fear. "It will be time enough to think of death when all resources are exhausted. Besides, it is cowardly to kill one's self. Rousseau has said, 'To suffer is more noble.'" With the utterance of this paradox, Gilbert raised his head and renewed his wandering course through the gardens. He had obtained the first glimpse of security, when, all at once, Philippe, arriving as we have seen, overturned all his ideas, and threw him into a fresh series of perplexities.

The brother, the brother sent for! it has been then satisfactorily proved! The family have determined on silence. Yes; but with all the investigations, all the refinement of details which for Gilbert meant the tortures of the Conciergerie, of the Châtelet, and of the Tournelle. They would drag him before Andrée; they would force him to kneel, to confess ignominiously his crime; and they would kill him like a dog with a cudgel or knife,— a legitimate vengeance justified in advance by numerous precedents.

Louis XV. was very indulgent to the nobility in such cases. And then Philippe was the most formidable avenger that Mademoiselle de Taverney could call to her aid. Philippe, who alone of the family had shown toward Gilbert the sentiments of a man and almost of an equal, —would not Philippe as surely kill the criminal with a word as with the sword; if this word were, "Gilbert, you have eaten of our bread, and you have dishonored us!"

So we have seen Gilbert stealing away at the first appearance of Philippe; and in returning he obeyed only

his instinct not to accuse himself; and from that moment, he concentrated all his strength into a single purpose, — resistance. He followed Philippe, saw him go to the apartments of Andrée, and talk with Doctor Louis; he watched everything, judged everything, understood the despair of Philippe. He saw that grief spring up and increase; his terrible scene with Andrée he discovered from the play of the shadows behind the curtains. "I am lost," he thought. And immediately, his reason wandering, he seized a knife to kill Philippe whom he expected to see appear at his door, or to kill himself, if necessary.

But, on the contrary, Philippe was reconciled with his sister. Gilbert saw him on his knees kissing Andrée's hands; here was a fresh hope, a door of safety. If Philippe had not come up to him with cries of rage, it was because Andrée was wholly ignorant of the name of the criminal. If she, the only witness, the only accuser, knew nothing, why no one knew anything. If Andrée, foolish hope, knew and did not speak, it was more than safety, — it was happiness, it was triumph. From this moment Gilbert rose to the level of the situation. Nothing arrested his progress now that he had recovered his clearness of vision. "Where is the evidence," he said, "if Mademoiselle de Taverney does not accuse me? And, fool that I am, is it the result she will accuse me of, or the crime itself? Now, she has not reproached me for the crime; nothing for three weeks past has indicated to me that she detested me, or avoided me more than formerly. If, then, she has not known the cause, nothing in the effect will point to me more than to another. I saw the king himself in the chamber of Mademoiselle Andrée. I will prove it, if need be, to the brother, and in spite of every denial of his Majesty, they will believe me. Yes; but this would be a dangerous

game. I will be silent; the king has too many ways of proving his innocence, or of crushing my evidence. But in default of the king, whose name cannot be brought into this affair under pain of imprisonment for life, or of death, have I not that unknown man who the same night led Mademoiselle de Taverney into the garden? This man, how will he defend himself? What will be their reason for suspecting him? How will they find him if they do suspect him? He is but an ordinary man; I am as good as he, and I will defend myself stoutly against him. Besides, they will not even think of me. God alone saw me," he added, laughing bitterly; "but this God who so often sees my grief and my tears without saying anything, why should he be so unjust as to betray me on this first chance for happiness that he has given me? Moreover, if there has been a crime, it is his, and not mine; and Monsieur de Voltaire proves incontestably that there are no longer any miracles. I am saved, I am calm; my secret is my own, the future is mine." After these reflections, or rather this compromise with his conscience, Gilbert locked up his garden-tools, and took his evening meal with his companions. He was gay, careless, defiant even. He had had remorse, he had been afraid, — a twofold weakness which a man, a philosopher, must hasten to forget. Only he reckoned without his conscience; Gilbert did not sleep.

CHAPTER XLVI.

TWO GRIEFS.

Gilbert had rightly judged the position when he said, speaking of the unknown man surprised by him in the gardens on that evening which had been so fatal to Mademoiselle de Taverney, "Will they find him?" In fact Philippe was wholly ignorant of the place of residence of Joseph Balsamo, Comte de Fenix. But he remembered that lady of quality, that Marquise de Savigny, to whom, on the thirtieth of May, Andrée had been conducted to be cared for. It was not yet too late to present himself at the house of this lady, who lived in the Rue Saint Honoré. Philippe restrained the agitation of his mind and of his senses; he ascended to the apartments of the lady, and the servant gave him immediately without hesitation the address of Balsamo, Rue Saint Claude, au Marais. Philippe hastened directly to the address indicated.

But it was not without profound emotion that he touched the knocker of this suspicious house, where, as he thought, were forever buried the repose and honor of poor Andrée. But with an appeal to his will he had sufficiently overcome indignation and emotion to preserve the strength which he was sure to need. He knocked, then, with a firm hand at the gate of the house which, according to the custom of the place, flew open. Philippe entered the court, holding his horse by the bridle. But he had not taken four steps when Fritz, coming out from the vestibule

and appearing at the top of the steps, stopped him with this question, "What does Monsieur want?"

Philippe trembled as if he had met with an unforeseen obstacle. He looked at the German, knitting his brow as if Fritz had not performed his simple duty as an attendant.

"I wish to speak to the master of the house, — to Comte de Fenix," replied Philippe, passing the bridle of his horse through a ring, and walking toward the house, which he entered.

"Monsieur is not at home," said Fritz, letting Philippe pass, however, with the politeness of a well-trained servant. Strange thing! Philippe seemed to have anticipated nothing less than this simple reply. He remained for a moment abashed. "Where can I find him?" he asked.

"I do not know, Monsieur."

"But you ought to know."

"I beg pardon, Monsieur does not account to me for his movements."

"My friend," said Philippe, "I must, however, speak to your master this evening."

"I doubt if it is possible."

"It must be; it is on business of the greatest importance."

Fritz bowed without answering.

"He has gone out, then?" asked Philippe.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"He will return of course?"

"I think not, Monsieur."

"Ah, you think not?"

"Yes."

"Very well," said Philippe, growing impatient; "meanwhile go tell your master —"

"But I have the honor of informing you," replied the imperturbable Fritz, "that Monsieur is not here."

"I know the importance of orders, my friend," said Philippe, "and yours ought to be regarded; but it cannot indeed apply to me, whose visit your master could not anticipate, and who come here accidentally."

"The order is for everybody, Monsieur," replied Fritz, blundering.

"Then since there is an order," said Philippe, "the Comte de Fenix is here?"

"Well, what then?" said Fritz, becoming impatient in his turn at such persistence.

"Why, I will wait for him."

"Monsieur is not here, I tell you," he replied; "the house took fire some time ago, and consequently it is not habitable."

"You live in it, however," said Philippe, blundering in his turn.

"I live here as keeper."

Philippe shrugged his shoulders like a man who does not believe a word of what is told him. Fritz began to get angry. "For the rest," he said, "whether Monsieur le Comte is here or not, it is not usual for persons to enter his house by force; and if you do not conform to custom, I shall be obliged —" Fritz stopped.

"To what?" asked Philippe, forgetting himself.

"To put you out," replied Fritz, calmly.

"You?" cried Philippe, his eyes flashing.

"I!" replied Fritz, resuming with the characteristic of his nation every appearance of coolness in proportion as his anger increased. And he took a step toward the young man, who, exasperated beyond control, drew his sword. Fritz, not alarmed at the sight of the blade, without calling for help, — he might, indeed, have been alone, —

seized from an armory a sort of stake armed with a short but sharp blade, and throwing himself upon Philippe like a cudgel-player rather than a fencer, he broke into a thousand pieces, at the first stroke, the blade of that little sword. Philippe uttered a cry of rage, and rushing in his turn toward the armory, tried to seize a weapon from it. At this moment the secret door of the corridor was opened, and the count appeared coming out from the shadow.

"What is the matter, Fritz?" he asked.

"Nothing, Monsieur," replied the servant, putting down his stick, but placing himself like a barrier before his master, who, standing on the steps of the private staircase, was more elevated than he by half his height.

"Monsieur le Comte de Fenix," said Philippe, "is it the custom in your country for lackeys to receive a gentleman spear in hand, or is it an order peculiar to your noble mansion?"

Fritz lowered his spear, and at a sign from his master put it in the corner of the vestibule.

"Who are you, Monsieur?" asked the count, who could scarcely see Philippe in the faint light of the lamp which lighted the antechamber.

"Some one who insists on speaking with you."

"Who insists?"

"Yes."

"That is a word which fully excuses Fritz, Monsieur; for I wish to speak to no one, and when I am at home I do not recognize the right of any one to insist on speaking to me. You are then guilty of a wrong toward me; but," Balsamo added with a sigh, "I pardon you, — on the condition, however, that you retire and trouble me no more."

"It well becomes you, indeed," cried Philippe, "to ask for peace, — you, who have destroyed mine."

"I have destroyed your peace?"

"I am Philippe de Taverney!" cried the young man, thinking that to the conscience of the count this name would explain everything.

"Philippe de Taverney? Monsieur," said the count, "I was well received at your father's house, you are welcome to mine."

"Ah, that is very fortunate," murmured Philippe.

"Please to follow me, Monsieur."

Balsamo shut the door of the private staircase, and preceding Philippe, he conducted him to the salon, where some of the scenes of this story have been unfolded to our view, — particularly the most recent of all which had taken place there, that of the Five Masters. The salon was lighted up as if some one had been expected; but it was evident that this was one of the luxurious customs of the house.

"Good evening, Monsieur de Taverney," said Balsamo, in a tone so mild and suppressed that Philippe involuntarily looked up at him. But at the sight of Balsamo he stepped back. The count indeed was but the shadow of himself, — his hollow eyes had no lustre; his cheeks, in growing thin, had encircled the mouth with two folds, and the facial angle, bare and bony, made the whole head look like a death's head. Philippe was astounded. Balsamo saw his astonishment, and a smile of mortal sadness passed over his white lips. "Monsieur," he said, "let me apologize for my servant; but indeed he followed his orders, and you — allow me to say so — were wrong in forcing him."

"Monsieur," said Philippe, "there are, you know, in life extreme situations, and I was in one of these situations." Balsamo did not answer. "I wished to see you," continued Philippe; "I wished to speak to you; I would have braved death in order to gain admission to you."

Balsamo remained silent and seemed to await an explanation of the words of the young man, without having the strength or the curiosity to ask for it.

"I have you now," continued Philippe, — "I have you now at length, and we will come to an explanation if you please; but in the first place be so good as to dismiss that man." And Philippe pointed to Fritz, who had just raised the portière as if to ask his master his last orders respecting the importunate visitor.

Balsamo fixed upon Philippe a look, the object of which was to discover his intentions; but finding himself in the presence of a man his equal in rank and distinction, Philippe had recovered calmness and presence of mind; he was impenetrable. Balsamo, therefore, by a simple motion of the head, or rather eyebrows, dismissed Fritz, and the two men sat down opposite each other, Philippe with his back to the fireplace, Balsamo with his elbow resting on a small table.

"Speak quickly, and clearly, if you please, Monsieur," said Balsamo, "for I listen to you only through kindness, and I warn you that I shall be quickly fatigued."

"I shall speak as I ought, Monsieur, and as long as I think proper," said Philippe; "and with your permission, I will begin with a question."

At this word a terrible frown shot from the eyes of Balsamo an electric flash. This word brought to his mind such memories that Philippe would have trembled if he had known what commotion he had excited in the depths of this man's heart. However, after a moment's silence to gain command over himself, Balsamo said, "Ask your question."

"Monsieur," replied Philippe, "you have never explained satisfactorily how you spent the time during that famous night of the thirtieth of May, from the moment

when you raised my sister from among the dying and the dead who crowded the Place Louis XV.?"

"What does that signify?" asked Balsamo.

"It signifies, Monsieur le Comte, that your whole conduct on that night has been and is now more than ever subject to suspicion."

"Suspicion?"

"Yes; and in all probability, it has not been the conduct of a man of honor."

"Monsieur," said Balsamo, "I do not understand you; you must see that my head is weary, weak, and that this weakness naturally makes me impatient."

"Monsieur!" cried Philippe, in his turn irritated by Balsamo's tone, at once haughty and calm.

"Monsieur," continued Balsamo, in the same tone, "since I last had the honor of seeing you I have met with a great misfortune: my house has been partly burned, and I have lost many precious treasures, — very precious, understand; in consequence of this trouble I am somewhat confused. Be, therefore, very clear, I beg, or I shall take leave of you immediately."

"Oh, no, Monsieur," said Philippe, "no, you will not take leave of me so easily as you say. I shall respect your sorrow if you show yourself considerate of mine; to me, also, Monsieur, there has come a great misfortune, — much greater than yours, I am sure."

Balsamo smiled with that smile of despair which Philippe had already seen upon his lips.

"I, Monsieur," continued Philippe, "have lost the honor of my family."

"Well, Monsieur," replied Balsamo, "how can I help you in this misfortune?"

"How can you help me?" cried Philippe, with flashing eyes.

"Certainly."

"You can restore me what I have lost, Monsieur!"

"Ah, you are mad, Monsieur!" cried Balsamo, and he reached for the bell. But he made this movement so gently and with so little anger that Philippe's arm easily stopped him.

"I am mad?" cried Philippe, in an angry tone. "But you do not understand that I refer to my sister, whom you held fainting in your arms on the thirtieth of May, — my sister, whom you conveyed to a house, which you said was respectable, but, as I think, infamous, — to my sister, in a word, whose honor I demand sword in hand?"

Balsamo shrugged his shoulders. "Eh, good God!" he murmured, "how many turnings to reach a thing so simple!"

"Scoundrel!" cried Philippe.

"What a deplorable voice you have, Monsieur!" said Balsamo, with the same gloomy impatience; "you stun me. Why, you do not come here to tell me that I have insulted your sister?"

"Yes, coward!"

"Again an exclamation, and a useless insult, Monsieur; who the devil has told you that I have insulted your sister?"

Philippe hesitated; the tone with which Balsamo pronounced these words amazed him. It was the height of impudence, or it was the cry of a clear conscience. "Who told me?" replied the young man.

"Yes, I demand it of you."

"My sister herself, Monsieur."

"Well, Monsieur, your sister —"

"You are about to say?" cried Philippe, with a threatening gesture.

"I was about to say, Monsieur, that you give me a very

poor idea both of yourself and your sister. It is the worst speculation in the world, do you know, that which certain women make on their dishonor. Now you have come with insult in your mouth, like the bearded brothers of the Italian comedy, sword in hand, to force me either to marry your sister, which shows that she is in great want of a husband, or to give you money because you know that I make gold. Well, you are very much mistaken on both points, — you will not have money, and your sister will remain unmarried."

"Then, I will have the blood which flows in your veins," cried Philippe, "if there is any."

"No, not even that, Monsieur."

"Why not?"

"The blood I have, I keep, and I could have had, if I wished, a cause for shedding it more serious than the one you offer me. Therefore, Monsieur, do me the favor to return peacefully; and if you make a noise, as the noise will make my head ache, I shall call Fritz. Fritz will come, and at a sign from me, he will break you in two like a twig. Go!" This time Balsamo rang, and as Philippe tried to prevent him, he opened an ebony box sitting on the little table, and took from it a double-barrelled pistol.

"Well, I like that better," cried Philippe; "kill me!"

"Why should I kill you?"

"Because you have dishonored me." The young man pronounced, in his turn, these words with such an accent of truth that Balsamo, looking at him with eyes full of kindness, said, "Is it possible then that you are in earnest?"

"You doubt it? you doubt the word of a gentleman?"

"And that Mademoiselle de Taverney could have herself conceived this infamous idea, and that she could have urged you to carry it out? Well, if it be so, I will give

you satisfaction. I swear to you on my honor that my conduct toward Mademoiselle your sister on the night of the thirtieth of May was irreproachable; that neither honor, nor human tribunal, nor divine justice, could discover in it anything contrary to the most perfect probity; do you believe me?"

"Monsieur!" said the young man, astonished.

"You know that I do not fear a duel,—you read that in my eyes, do you not? As to my weakness, do not be deceived; it is only apparent. I have little blood in my face, it is true; but my muscles have lost nothing of their strength. Do you wish for a proof of it? See!" And Balsamo raised with a single hand, and without effort, an enormous bronze vase placed on a stand carved by Boule.

"Well, so be it, Monsieur," said Philippe; "I believe you as to the thirtieth of May. But you employ subterfuge; you take advantage of an error in time. Since that you have seen my sister again."

Balsamo hesitated in his turn. "It is true," said he, "I have seen her since;" and his brow, clear for a moment, grew dark in a terrible manner.

"Ah, you see plainly!" said Philippe.

"Well, I have seen your sister again. What does that prove against me?"

"It proves that you have put her into this inexplicable sleep, of which, three times already, at your approach, she has felt the effect, and that you have taken advantage of this insensibility to cover the secret of your crime."

"Once more, who says that?" cried Balsamo.

"My sister."

"How does she know it, since she was asleep?"

"Ah, you confess, then, that she was put to sleep?"

"More, Monsieur; I confess to having magnetized her myself."

"Magnetized her?"

"Yes."

"And with what object, if not to dishonor her?"

"With what object, alas!" said Balsamo, dropping his head upon his breast.

"Speak, speak, then!"

"With the object, Monsieur, of making her reveal a secret which was more precious to me than life."

"Oh, trickery, subterfuge!"

"And it was during this night," continued Balsamo, following out his own thought, rather than answering Philippe's insulting question, "that your sister —"

"Was dishonored; yes, Monsieur."

"Dishonored?"

"My sister is a mother!"

Balsamo uttered a cry. "Oh, true, true!" said he, "I remember; I went off without waking her."

"You confess! you confess!" cried Philippe.

"And some villain, during that terrible night, — oh, terrible for us all, Monsieur! — took advantage of her sleep."

"Ah! would you mock me, Monsieur?"

"No; I would convince you."

"That will be difficult."

"Where is your sister at this moment?"

"There, where you so conveniently discovered her."

"At Trianon?"

"Yes."

"I will go to Trianon with you, Monsieur."

Philippe was motionless with astonishment.

"I have committed a fault, Monsieur, but I am guiltless of crime. I left that child in a magnetic sleep. Well, as satisfaction for this fault, which may justly be forgiven me, I myself will tell you the name of the guilty man."

"Tell it! tell it!"

"I do not know it myself," said Balsamo.

"Who does know it, then?"

"Your sister."

"But she has refused to tell me."

"Perhaps, but she will tell it to me."

"My sister?"

"If your sister accuses any one, will you believe her?"

"Yes; for my sister is an angel of purity."

Balsamo rang. "Fritz, a carriage," said he, when the German appeared.

Philippe paced the room like a madman. "The guilty one!" said he; "you promise to inform me who he is?"

"Monsieur," said Balsamo, "your sword has been broken in the struggle. Permit me to offer you another;" and he took from a chair a magnificent sword, with hilt of silver-gilt, which he drew through Philippe's belt.

"But you?" said the young man.

"I, Monsieur, do not need weapons," replied Balsamo; "my defence is at Trianon, and my defender will be yourself, when your sister shall have spoken." A quarter of an hour after, they entered the carriage, and Fritz, driving two excellent horses at a rapid pace, conveyed them to Versailles.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE RIDE TO TRIANON.

All these journeys and all this explanation had taken time, so that it was nearly two o'clock in the morning when they left the Rue Saint Claude. It took an hour and a quarter to reach Versailles, and ten minutes to go from Versailles to Trianon, so that it was half-past three before the two men reached their destination. During the last part of the way, the dawn already spread its rosy tint on the green forests and the hillsides of Sèvres. As if a veil had been slowly withdrawn from their eyes, the fish-ponds of Ville d'Avray, and the more distant ones of Buc, were shining like mirrors. Then at last appeared the colonnades and roofs of Versailles, already red with the rays of a sun not yet visible. From time to time a window sparkled with the reflection of a ray of fire, which penetrated with its light the violet tint of the morning's mist. On coming to the end of the avenue that leads from Versailles to Trianon, Philippe stopped the carriage, and addressing his companion, who during the journey had preserved a gloomy silence, "Monsieur," said he, "we shall be obliged, I am afraid, to wait here some time. At Trianon the gates are not opened before five in the morning, and I am afraid that if we enter earlier our arrival will look suspicious to the watchmen and the guards."

Balsamo did not reply, but showed by a movement of the head that he acquiesced in the proposition.

"However, Monsieur," continued Philippe, "this delay will give me time to impart to you some reflections made during our journey hither."

Balsamo gave Philippe a look full of weariness and indifference. "As you please, Monsieur," said he; "speak, I am listening!"

"You told me, Monsieur," replied Philippe, "that during the night of the thirtieth of May you placed my sister in the house of Madame la Marquise de Savigny?"

"You were assured of it yourself, Monsieur," said Balsamo, "since you called to thank that lady."

"You then added that, as an attendant in the king's stables had accompanied you from the hôtel of the marchioness to our house, that is, to the Rue Coq-Héron, you had not been alone with her; I believed you on your word of honor."

"And you did well, Monsieur."

"But in recalling to myself the more recent circumstances, I am forced to think that a month since at Trianon, that night when you found a way to slip into the gardens, you must have entered her chamber."

"I never entered the chamber of your sister at Trianon, Monsieur."

"Listen, however! you see that before coming into the presence of Andrée, all things must be made clear."

"Clear up matters, Monsieur le Chevalier. I ask nothing better, and we have come here for that purpose."

"Well, on that night, — be careful in your answer, for what I say is true, and I have it from the lips of my sister, — on that night, I say, my sister retired early; you must then have surprised her in bed?"

Balsamo shook his head by way of denial.

"You deny it; take care!" said Philippe.

"I do not deny, Monsieur; you question me, I answer."

"Well, I shall go on questioning; continue therefore to reply."

Balsamo did not become angry, but on the contrary made a sign to Philippe to go on.

"When you ascended to the apartments of my sister," continued Philippe, becoming more and more excited, "when you surprised her, and magnetized her by your infernal power, Andrée was in bed; she was reading; she felt the approach of that torpor which your presence always brings upon her, and she lost consciousness. Now you say that you did nothing but question her; only, you add that you forgot when going away to awaken her; and yet," added Philippe, seizing Balsamo's arm, and pressing it convulsively, — "yet, when she came to her senses the next day, she was no longer in bed, but at the foot of her sofa, half-naked. Reply to this accusation, Monsieur, without evasion."

During this appeal, Balsamo, like a man waking up, drove away one by one the gloomy thoughts which obscured his mind. "Indeed, Monsieur," said he, "you need not have returned to this subject, thus seeking with me a lasting quarrel. I have come here out of condescension and from interest in you, — you seem to forget that. You are young, you are an officer, you are accustomed to speak out with your hand on the pommel of your sword. All this makes you reason falsely in serious circumstances. At my own house I did more than I ought to have done to convince you, and obtain from you a little peace. You begin again; take care, for if you fatigue me, I shall go to sleep in the midst of my troubles, in comparison with which yours are, I assure you, mere trifles; and when I sleep thus, Monsieur, woe to him who wakes me! I did not enter your sister's chamber; that is all I can tell you.

Your sister of her own free will, in which I confess my will had great share, came to me in the garden."

Philippe made a movement, but Balsamo stopped him. "I promised you proof," continued he; "you shall have it. Shall it be immediately? So be it. Let us enter Trianon instead of wasting time in useless talking. Do you prefer to wait? We will wait, then; but in silence and without excitement if you please." This said, with the air with which our readers are acquainted, Balsamo, the momentary gleam fading from his eyes, became absorbed in meditation.

Philippe uttered a low growl, like the ferocious beast which is preparing to bite; then changing suddenly his attitude and thought, "With this man," said he, "one must persuade or dominate by some superiority. I have just now no means of domination or persuasion; I must have patience." But as it was impossible for him to be patient in the presence of Balsamo, he jumped out of the carriage and began pacing the verdant alley in which the carriage had stopped. At the end of ten minutes, Philippe felt that it was impossible to wait any longer. He preferred to have the gate opened before the hour, at the risk of arousing suspicions. "Besides," he murmured, cherishing an idea which many times before had presented itself to his mind, — "besides, what suspicions can the porter entertain, if I say to him that anxiety about the health of my sister impelled me to go to Paris for a physician, and bring him here by sunrise?"

Adopting this idea, which by reason of his desire to put it into execution, had gradually lost its dangerous aspect, he ran to the carriage. "Yes, Monsieur," he said, "you are right; it is useless to wait longer, come, come!"

But it was only on a repetition of this request that

Balsamo threw off his cloak, fastened his great coat with burnished steel buttons, and left the carriage. Philippe took a path which led by a short cut to the gate of the park. "Let us walk quickly," he said to Balsamo. And he went on so rapidly that Balsamo could with difficulty keep up with him. The gate was opened, Philippe gave his explanation, and the two men passed in. When the gate was closed behind them, Philippe stopped once more. "Monsieur," he said, "one final word. We are at the end of our journey; I do not know what question you are about to ask my sister. Spare her at least the details of the horrible scene which took place during her sleep. Spare the purity of mind, though the purity of the body has been soiled."

"Monsieur," replied Balsamo, "observe carefully what I say; I never entered the park beyond the tall trees you see yonder, opposite the house in which your sister lives. I have consequently never gone into the chamber of Mademoiselle de Taverney, as I have already had the honor of telling you. As to the scene whose effect you dread upon the mind of Mademoiselle, your sister, this effect will be produced only upon you, because from this very moment I order Mademoiselle, your sister, to fall into a magnetic sleep."

Balsamo stopped, folded his arms, turned toward the pavilion where Andrée lived, and stood one moment motionless, with knitted brow and with the expression of all-powerful will upon his countenance.

"And stay," he said, letting his arms fall, "Mademoiselle Andrée must be sleeping at this moment."

Philippe's face expressed doubt.

"Ah, you do not believe me," said Balsamo. "Well, listen. To prove to you that I have no occasion to go in to her, I will command her, asleep as she is, to come to us

at the foot of the steps, at the very spot where I spoke to her at our last interview."

"Be it so," said Philippe; "when I see that I shall believe."

"Let us go into this walk, and wait behind the hedge."

Philippe and Balsamo repaired to the place designated. Balsamo extended his hand toward the apartment of Andrée; but he had scarcely done so, when a slight noise was heard in the adjoining hedge-row.

"A man," said Balsamo; "let us be careful."

"Where?" asked Philippe, searching for the person whom the count had spoken of.

"There, in the shrubbery on the left," said the latter.

"Ah, yes," said Philippe; "it is Gilbert, an old servant of ours."

"Have you anything to fear from this young man?"

"No, I think not; but no matter. Stop, Monsieur; if Gilbert has risen, others may have risen as well."

Meantime Gilbert had fled in fright; for seeing Philippe and Balsamo together, he comprehended instinctively that he was lost.

"Well, Monsieur, on what do you decide?"

"Monsieur," said Philippe, experiencing in spite of himself the sort of magnetic charm which this man diffused around him, "if your power is really so great as to lead Mademoiselle de Taverney to us, show it by some sign; but do not bring my sister to a place exposed like this, where the first-comer might hear your questions and her answers."

"You spoke in time," said Balsamo, seizing the arm of the young man and pointing out to him, at the window of the main corridor, Andrée, white and rigid, who had left her chamber, and obeying Balsamo's command was preparing to descend the stairs.

"Stop her; stop her!" said Philippe, frightened and astonished at the same time.

"Be it so," said Balsamo. The count extended his arm in the direction of Mademoiselle de Taverney, who immediately stopped. Then after stopping a moment, she turned right about and entered her chamber. Philippe hurried after her, Balsamo following him, and entered the room almost as soon as Andrée, and taking the young girl in his arms, he made her sit down. A few moments later Balsamo came in and shut the door behind him. But brief as the interval between these entrances, a third person had had time to slip in between the two men and enter Nicole's cabinet, where he hid himself, knowing that his life depended on this interview. This third person was Gilbert.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE REVELATION.

BALSAMO closed the door behind him, and appeared on the threshold just as Philippe was looking at his sister with mingled terror and curiosity. "Are you ready, Chevalier?" he asked.

"Yes, Monsieur, yes," stammered Philippe, trembling.

"We can begin then, to question your sister?"

"If you please," said Philippe, trying to raise by force of respiration the weight which was crushing his breast.

"But before we begin, observe your sister."

"I see her, Monsieur."

"You really believe that she sleeps, do you not?"

"Yes."

"And that consequently she has no consciousness of what takes place here?"

Philippe made no reply, except by a gesture which expressed doubt. Balsamo then went to the fireplace and lighted a candle, which he passed before Andrée's eyes without causing her to move an eyelid.

"Yes, yes; she sleeps, it is evident," said Philippe; "but, good Heavens! what a strange sleep!"

"Well, I will question her," continued Balsamo; "or rather, since you have manifested fear lest I address her some indiscreet interrogation, question her yourself, Chevalier."

"But I have spoken to her; I touched her just now. She did not seem to hear me, she did not seem to feel my touch."

"I will put you in connection with her," and Balsamo placed Philippe's hand in that of Andrée.

Immediately the young girl smiled, and murmured, "Ah, it is you, brother?"

"You see," said Balsamo, "she recognizes you now."

"Yes; it is strange."

"Question her, she will answer."

"But if she does not remember when awake, how can she remember when asleep?"

"It is one of the mysteries of science," and Balsamo, sighing, sat down upon an easy chair in a corner.

Philippe sat motionless, his hand in Andrée's. How should he begin his questioning, the result of which would assure him of his dishonor, and reveal a criminal whom perhaps his vengeance could not reach? As for Andrée, she was in a state of calmness bordering on ecstasy, and her face expressed peace rather than any other feeling. Trembling all over, he obeyed nevertheless the expressive glance of Balsamo, which bade him begin. But in proportion as he contemplated his misfortune, as his face grew dark, that of Andrée was covered with a cloud, and it was she who began by saying, "Yes, you are right, brother; it is a great misfortune for the family."

Andrée interpreted thus the thought which she read in her brother's mind. Philippe was not expecting this beginning; he started, "What misfortune?" he asked, without considering his answer.

"Ah, you know well, brother."

"Force her to speak, Monsieur; she will speak."

"How can I force her?"

"Will her to speak, that is all."

Philippe looked at his sister, forming a wish in his mind. Andrée blushed.

"Oh!" said the young girl, "how bad it is of you, Philippe, to think that Andrée has deceived you."

"You love no one, then?"

"No one."

"Then it is not an accomplice, it is a criminal I must punish!"

"I do not understand you, brother."

Philippe looked at the count as if to ask advice.

"Press her," said Balsamo.

"Press her?"

"Yes, question her freely."

"Without respect for the modesty of this child?"

"Oh, do not be alarmed; on awaking she will remember nothing of it."

"But can she answer my questions?"

"Do you see clearly?" Balsamo asked Andrée.

Andrée started at the sound of this voice; she turned her lustreless eyes toward Balsamo. "Not so clearly as if you questioned me; but still I see."

"Well," Philippe asked, "if you see, sister, give me an account in detail of that night when you fainted away."

"Do you not begin with the night of the thirtieth of May, Monsieur? Your suspicions date from that night, I think. The time has come to clear up everything at once."

"No, Monsieur," replied Philippe; "it is useless, and now I trust your word. He who wields a power like yours, does not use it for the attainment of any common object. Sister," repeated Philippe, "tell me everything that happened on that night of your swoon."

"I do not remember," said Andrée.

"You hear, Monsieur le Comte?"

"She must remember; she must speak. Order her to."

"But if she was asleep?"

"The mind was awake." Then he arose, held out his hand to Andrée, and with a knitting of the brows which indicated a redoubling of will and action, "Remember," he said; "I will it."

"I remember," said Andrée.

"Oh!" said Philippe, wiping his forehead.

"What do you wish to know?"

"Everything."

"From what moment?"

"From the moment when you retired to bed."

"Do you see yourself?" said Balsamo.

"Yes, I see myself; I hold in my hand the glass prepared by Nicole — Oh, my God!"

"What? what is it?"

"Oh, the wretch!"

"Speak, sister; speak!"

"This glass contains a drink which has been drugged; if I drink it, I am lost."

"A drink which has been drugged!" cried Philippe; "for what object?"

"Wait! wait!"

"First, about the drink."

"I was about to raise it to my lips; but — at that moment — "

"Well?"

"The count called me."

"What count?"

"He," said Andrée, pointing to Balsamo.

"And then?"

"Then I put down the glass and went to sleep."

"What next? what next?" asked Philippe.

"I arose and joined him."

"Where was the count?"

"Under the lime-trees opposite my window."

"And the count never entered your room, sister?"

"Never."

A glance from Balsamo toward Philippe said clearly, "You see whether I deceive you, Monsieur?"

"And you say you went to join the count?"

"Yes; I obey him when he calls me."

"What did the count want of you?"

Andrée hesitated.

"Say, say!" cried Balsamo; "I will not listen," and he fell back into his chair, burying his head in his hands as if to prevent the sound of Andrée's words from reaching him.

"Speak! What did the count want?" repeated Philippe.

"He wished to seek intelligence from me —" She again stopped; one would have said that she was afraid of breaking the count's heart.

"Go on, sister, go on."

"Of a person who had escaped from his house, and —" Andrée lowered her voice, — "and who has since died." Softly as Andrée had pronounced these words Balsamo heard or divined them, for he uttered a deep groan. Philippe stopped; there was a moment's silence.

"Continue, continue," said Balsamo; "your brother wishes to know everything, Mademoiselle; your brother must know all. After this man had received the information he desired, what did he do?"

"He fled," said Andrée.

"Leaving you in the garden?" asked Philippe.

"Yes."

"What did you do then?"

"As he retreated from me, since the strength which sustained me went with him, I fell."

"In a swoon?"

"No; still a sleep, but a leaden sleep."

"Can you remember what happened to you during that sleep?"

"I will try."

"Well, what happened? Speak!"

"A man came out from a thicket, took me in his arms, and carried me —"

"Where?"

"Here into my chamber."

"Ah! — and this man, do you see him?"

"Stay — yes — yes — Oh!" continued Andrée, with an expression of disgust and uneasiness; "oh, it is again that little Gilbert!"

"Gilbert?"

"Yes."

"What did he do?"

"He put me down on the sofa."

"Afterward?"

"Wait."

"See! see!" said Balsamo; "I will that you see."

"He listens; he goes into the other chamber; he draws back as if in fear; he enters Nicole's cabinet — My God! my God!"

"What?"

"A man follows him; and I, — I, who cannot rise, defend myself, or cry out; I, who sleep —"

"Who is this man?"

"Brother, brother!" and Andrée's countenance expressed the profoundest grief.

"Tell who this man is," commanded Balsamo; "I will it!"

"The king!" murmured Andrée; "it is the king!"

Philippe shuddered.

"Ah!" muttered Balsamo, "I suspected it."

"He approaches me," continued Andrée; "he speaks to me, he takes me in his arms, he kisses me. Oh, brother, brother!"

Great tears came into Philippe's eyes, while his hand grasped the handle of the sword given him by Balsamo.

"Speak! speak!" continued the count, in a tone more and more imperative.

"Oh, what happiness! he is perplexed; he stops; he looks at me; he is afraid; he flies; Andrée is saved!"

Philippe drank in, breathless, every word that issued from Andrée's lips. "Saved! Andrée is saved!" he repeated mechanically.

"Wait, brother, wait!" and the young girl sought the arm of her brother as if to support herself.

"Afterward?" asked Philippe.

"I had forgotten."

"What?"

"There, there, in Nicole's cabinet, a knife in his hand —"

"A knife in his hand?"

"I see him; he is pale as death."

"Who?"

"Gilbert."

Philippe held his breath.

"He follows the king," continued Andrée; "he closes the door after him; he puts his foot upon the candle which is burning the carpet; he comes toward me. Oh!"

The young girl raised herself in the arms of her brother. Every muscle in her body grew stiff, almost to breaking.

"Oh, the villain!" said she, at last; and she fell back powerless.

"My God!" said Philippe, not daring to interrupt her.

"It is he; it is he!" murmured the young girl. Then

raising herself up to speak in her brother's ear, with flashing eye and trembling voice, "You will kill him, will you not, Philippe?"

"Oh, yes!" cried the young man, jumping up, and upsetting a small table behind him covered with china. The china was broken into pieces. With the noise of this fall was mingled a dull sound and a sudden shaking of the partitions; then a cry from Andrée, which was heard above all.

"What is that?" said Balsamo. "A door was opened."

"Was any one listening?" cried Philippe, grasping his sword.

"It was he," said Andrée, — "it was he again."

"But who is he?"

"Gilbert, Gilbert, still! Ah, you will kill him, Philippe, you will kill him?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" cried the young man; and he rushed to the antechamber sword in hand, while Andrée fell back on the sofa. Balsamo rushed after the young man, and held him by the arm.

"Take care, Monsieur!" said he, "that which is secret would become public; it is daylight, and the echo of royal houses is loud."

"Oh, Gilbert, Gilbert!" murmured Philippe; "and he was hidden there. He heard us; I could kill him. Oh, the accursed villain!"

"Yes, but silence! You can find this young man another time; your sister needs you now, Monsieur. You see she begins to be fatigued by so much emotion."

"Oh, yes; I understand her suffering by my own; this misfortune is so terrible, so irreparable! Oh, Monsieur, Monsieur, it will kill me!"

"On the contrary, you will live for her, Chevalier; for she needs you, having only you. Love her, pity her, take

care of her! And now," continued he, after a moment's silence, "have you further need of me?"

"No, Monsieur. Pardon me my suspicions, my insults; and yet all the injury comes from you, Monsieur."

"I do not excuse myself, Chevalier; but do you forget what your sister said?"

"What did she say? My mind wanders."

"If I had not come, she would have taken the draught prepared by Nicole, and then it would have been the king. Would the misfortune have been less?"

"No, Monsieur, it would have been still the same; and I see clearly that we were doomed. Awake my sister, Monsieur."

"But she will see me; she will, perhaps, understand what has been going on. It is better that I awake her, as I put her to sleep, — at a distance."

"Thanks, thanks!"

"Then, adieu, Monsieur."

"One word more, Count. You are a man of honor?"

"Oh, the secret you mean?"

"Count — "

"A needless charge, Monsieur; in the first place, because I am a man of honor; then, having decided to have nothing more to do with men, I shall forget men and their secrets. At all times call upon me, if I can be of use to you. But, no, no, I am no longer good for anything; I am of no more use upon the earth. Adieu, Monsieur, adieu!" and bowing to Philippe, Balsamo looked once more at Andrée, whose head was leaning back with every appearance of grief and lassitude. "O Science!" he murmured, "how many victims for a result without value!" and he disappeared.

As he retreated Andrée revived. She raised her head, heavy as if it had been made of lead, and looking at her

brother with wondering eyes, "Oh, Philippe!" she murmured, "what has happened?"

Philippe restrained the sob which was choking him, and smiling heroically, "Nothing, sister!" said he.

"And yet I seem to have been mad, and to have dreamed."

"Dreamed? and what have you dreamed, my dear and good Andrée?"

"Oh, Doctor Louis, Doctor Louis, brother!"

"Andrée," cried Philippe, pressing her hand, "Andrée, you are pure as the light of day; but everything accuses you, everything is against you. A terrible secret is imposed upon us two. I will go and find Doctor Louis, and ask him to say to Madame la Dauphine that you are attacked by an unconquerable homesickness, which a stay at Taverney alone can cure; and then we will depart either for Taverney or for some other part of the world. Then both, in seclusion there, loving, consoling each other —"

"Yet, brother," said Andrée, "if I am as pure as you say —"

"Dear Andrée, I will explain it all to you; meantime, prepare for departure."

"But my father?"

"Father," said Philippe, with a serious air, "father, — that is my concern; I will prepare him."

"He will accompany us, then?"

"Father? oh, impossible, impossible! We two, Andrée, — we two alone, I say."

"Oh, how you frighten me, dear! how you alarm me, brother! how I suffer, Philippe!"

"God is everywhere, Andrée," said the young man; "courage, then! I will seek the doctor. What makes you ill, Andrée, is sorrow at leaving Taverney, — sorrow which

you conceal for the sake of Madame la Dauphine. Come, come, be brave, sister, the honor of both of us is at stake!" and Philippe embraced his sister hastily, for he was choking with emotion. Then he picked up his sword, which he had dropped, sheathed it with trembling hand, and rushed out on to the stairs. A quarter of an hour after he knocked at Doctor Louis's door, who, while the court was at Trianon, lived at Versailles.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE LITTLE GARDEN OF DOCTOR LOUIS.

Doctor Louis, at whose door we have left Philippe, was walking in a little garden surrounded by four high walls, which formed a part of the dependencies of an old Ursuline convent, and had been converted into a storehouse for Messieurs the dragoons of the king's household.

Doctor Louis read, while walking, the proofs of a new work he was about to have printed, and stooped from time to time to pull from the path in which he was walking, or from the parterre on either side, the weeds which offended his instinct of symmetry and order. A single servant, rather surly, like every domestic of an industrious man who does not like to be disturbed, took the whole care of the doctor's house. In answer to Philippe's resounding knock, she approached the door and half opened it. But the young man, instead of parleying with the servant, pushed the door open and went in. Once master of the passage he saw the garden and in it the doctor. Then, without paying any attention to the speeches and outcries of the vigilant guardian, he rushed into the garden. At the sound of his steps the doctor looked up. "Ah, ah!" he said, "is it you?"

"Pardon me, Doctor, for having forced your door and disturbed your solitude; but the moment you had foreseen has arrived; I need you, and I come to implore your assistance."

"I have promised you, Monsieur," said the doctor; "and I promise it now."

Philippe bowed, too much affected to begin the conversation himself. Doctor Louis understood his hesitation. "How is the invalid?" he asked, anxious on account of Philippe's paleness, and fearing some catastrophe as a crisis of this drama.

"Very well, thank God, Doctor; and my sister is so worthy and so honest a girl that really God would not be just to send her suffering and danger."

The doctor looked at Philippe as if to question him; his words seemed to him a continuation of the denials of the evening before.

"Then," said he, "she was the victim of some surprise, or some plot."

"Yes, Doctor, victim of an unheard of surprise, — victim of an infamous plot."

The doctor clasped his hands, and lifted his eyes toward heaven. "Alas!" said he, "we live, in this respect, in horrible times; and I think there is pressing need of physicians of nations, as there have been so long physicians of individuals."

"Yes," said Philippe, "yes, let them come; no one will be more glad to see them than I; meanwhile —" And Philippe made a threatening gesture.

"Ah!" said the doctor, "you are, I see, Monsieur, one of those who make the reparation of crime consist in violence and murder."

"Yes, Doctor," Philippe calmly replied, "yes, I am one of those."

"A duel," sighed the doctor, — "a duel, which will not restore your sister's honor, even if you kill the criminal, and which will plunge her in despair if you are killed. Ah, Monsieur, I thought that you had a sound mind and

an intelligent heart; I thought I had heard you express the desire that everything relating to this affair should be kept secret."

Philippe laid his hand upon the doctor's arm. "Monsieur," said he, "you are strangely mistaken in me; I have a steadfast purpose which springs from deep conviction and a clear conscience. I wish to do justly, not to do myself justice; I wish, not to expose my sister to abandonment and death by getting myself killed, but to avenge her by killing the scoundrel."

"You will kill him, — you, a gentleman? You will commit a murder?"

"Monsieur, if I had seen him ten minutes before the crime, stealing like a thief into that chamber, into which, on account of his low station, he had no right to put his foot, and had then killed him, every one would have said that I had done well; why, then, should I spare him now? Has crime made him sacred?"

"So this bitter purpose is determined upon in your mind, fixed in your heart?"

"Fixed, determined upon! I shall find him some time, however carefully he hides; and then, I tell you, Monsieur, without pity, without remorse, I will kill him like a dog!"

"Then," said Doctor Louis, "you will commit a crime equal to his, — a more odious crime, perhaps; for one never knows whether an imprudent word, or the coquettish look of a woman may not have urged on the desire and lust of the man. Kill him! when you have other reparation, — when a marriage —"

Philippe looked up. "Are you unaware, Monsieur, that the family of Taverney-Maison-Rouge dates from the Crusades, and that my sister is as noble as an infanta or an archduchess?"

"Yes, I understand; and the culprit, he is not; he is a wretch, a clodhopper, as you high-bred men say. Yes, yes," he continued, with a bitter smile, "yes, it is true; God has made men of a certain inferior clay to be killed by other men of finer clay; oh, yes! you are right, — kill, Monsieur, kill!" And the doctor turned his back on Philippe and began to pull up here and there the weeds in his garden.

Philippe folded his arms. "Doctor, listen to me," he said; "it is not a question of a seducer to whom a coquette has given more or less encouragement; it is not a question of a man provoked, as you say, — we speak of a miserable fellow brought up by us, and who, after having eaten the bread of pity, in the night, taking advantage of an artificial sleep, of a swoon, of death, so to speak, has basely and treacherously profaned the holiest and purest of women, whom in the light of day he did not dare look in the face. Before a tribunal this guilty man would certainly be doomed to death; well, I will judge him as impartially as a tribunal, and I will kill him. Now, Doctor, will you, whom I have thought so generous and so noble, — will you make me purchase this service, or impose on me a condition? In rendering it to me, will you do like those who seek to oblige, and to satisfy themselves at the same time? If it is so, Doctor, you are not that wise man I have admired; you are only an ordinary man, and in spite of the disdain which you showed me just now, I am superior to you, — I, who have confided to you, without reservation, my whole secret."

"You say," replied the doctor, thoughtfully, "that the guilty man has fled?"

"Yes, Doctor; no doubt he foresaw that the affair would become known; he heard that he was accused, and immediately took flight."

"Good! Now what do you desire, Monsieur," asked the doctor.

"Your assistance in removing my sister from Versailles, to bury in a thicker and more silent darkness the terrible secret that would dishonor us if it should become known."

"I will ask you but one question."

Philippe was indignant.

"Listen to me," continued the doctor, with a gesture which commanded calmness. "A Christian philosopher, of whom you have just made a confessor, is obliged to impose upon you a condition, not with reference to the service rendered, but in pursuance of the law of conscience. Humanity is a duty, Monsieur, not a virtue. You speak to me of killing a man; I must prevent it, as I would have prevented by all the means in my power, by violence even, the accomplishment of the crime committed upon your sister. Therefore, Monsieur, I adjure you, make me an oath."

"Oh, never! never!"

"You will do it," cried Doctor Louis, vehemently, — "you will do it, man of blood; recognize everywhere the hand of God, and do not assume to direct its stroke. The culprit, you say, was within your reach?"

"Yes, Doctor; by opening a door, if I could have divined that he was there, I should have been face to face with him."

"Well, he has fled, he trembles, his punishment has begun. Ah, you smile; what God does appears to you feeble! remorse seems insufficient! Wait, wait, then! You will stay with your sister, and you will promise me never to pursue the criminal. If you meet him, that is, if God delivers him up to you — well, I am also a man! — in that case you will see!"

"Nonsense, Monsieur; will he not always fly from me?"

"Who knows? The assassin flies, the assassin seeks refuge, the assassin fears the scaffold; and yet as if he were magnetized, the sword of justice draws this criminal to itself, and he finally falls under the hand of the executioner. Besides, it is a question now of giving up all that you have undertaken so painfully to do? It is for the world in which you live and to whom you cannot explain the innocence of your sister, it is for all these curious idlers that you kill a man; and you would feed their curiosity twice, — by the avowal of the attempt in the first place, afterward by the scandal of the punishment. No, no, believe me; keep silence, bury this misfortune."

"Oh, who will know when I shall have killed this villain, that it was on my sister's account?"

"You would have to give a reason for this murder."

"Well, Doctor, I will obey; I will not pursue the criminal. But God will be just; oh, yes! God uses impunity as a bait; God will again show me the criminal."

"In that case it will be God who has condemned him. Give me your hand, Monsieur."

"There it is."

"What must I do for Mademoiselle de Taverney? Tell me."

"You must, dear Doctor, find a pretext with Madame la Dauphine for taking her away for a time, — longing for the country, fresh air — "

"That is easy."

"Yes; that is your affair, and I rely upon you. I will then take my sister to some corner of France, Taverney for example, far from all eyes, from all suspicion."

"No, no, Monsieur, that would be impossible. The poor child needs constant care and solace; she will need all the

aid of science. Let me then find for her near here, in a village I know of, a retreat a hundred times more secluded, a hundred times more safe than the wild country into which you would take her."

"Oh, Doctor, you think so?"

"Yes, I have reason to think so. Suspicion always moves from the centre outward like those circles caused by a stone thrown into the water; the stone however does not move, and when the undulations are obliterated no one sees the cause of them, buried as it is under the depths of the water."

"Then, Doctor, go to work."

"From to-day, Monsieur?"

"Apprise Madame la Dauphine."

"This very morning."

"And for the rest?"

"In twenty-four hours, you shall have my answer."

"Oh, thanks, Doctor; you are for me a god!"

"Well, young man, now that everything is arranged between us, accomplish your mission; return to your sister, console her, protect her."

"Adieu, Doctor, adieu!"

The doctor, after having watched Philippe until he was out of sight, returned to his walk, his proofs, and the weeding of his little garden.

CHAPTER L.

FATHER AND SON.

When Philippe returned to his sister he found her very much agitated, very uneasy. "My dear," said she, "I have been thinking while you were away of all that has happened to me for some time past. It is an abyss which will swallow up the little reason that remains to me. Well, you have seen Doctor Louis?"

"I have just been to his house, Andrée."

"That man has brought a terrible accusation against me; is it just?"

"He was not mistaken, sister."

Andrée grew pale, and her small and delicate hands contracted nervously.

"The name," said she, then, — "the name of the wretch who ruined me?"

"My sister, you must remain ignorant of it forever."

"Oh, Philippe, you do not speak the truth; Philippe, you are false to your own conscience. This name, I must know it; so that feeble as I am, and having nothing for myself but prayer, I may by prayer direct against the criminal all the anger of God. The name of this man, Philippe?"

"Let us never speak of it, sister."

Andrée seized his hand, and looked him in the face. "Oh!" said she, "this is what you reply to me, — you who have a sword by your side!"

Philippe grew pale at this exhibition of anger, and restraining his own fury, "Andrée," he said, "I cannot tell

you what I do not know myself. Secrecy is ordered me by the destiny which overwhelms us; this secret, exposure of which would compromise the honor of our family, a last favor of God renders inviolable to all."

"Except for one man, Philippe,— for a man who laughs, for a man who defies us! — oh, my God! for a man who laughs infernally at us, perhaps, in his dark retreat."

Philippe wrung his hands, looked upward, and answered nothing.

"This man," cried Andrée, with increasing anger and indignation, "I know him, perhaps, — in short, Philippe, permit me to present him to you. I have already described his strange influence over me; I think I sent you to him —"

"That man is innocent; I have seen him; I have proof. So do not seek farther, Andrée, seek no farther."

"Philippe, let us ascend a little higher than this man, will you? Let us go to the first ranks of the powerful men of this kingdom. Let us go even to the king!"

Philippe encircled with his arms this poor child, sublime in her ignorance and in her indignation, "There," he said, "all those whom you have mentioned while awake, you have named in your sleep; all these whom you accuse with the ferocity of virtue you have vindicated in your magnetic sleep, when you saw, so to speak, the crime committed."

"Did I name the guilty one?" she said, with flashing eyes.

"No," Philippe replied, "no. Ask no more, follow my example, — submit to destiny. The misfortune is irreparable; it is doubled for you by the impunity of the criminal; but hope, hope! God is above all; God reserves for those who are oppressed a savage joy which is called vengeance."

"Vengeance!" she murmured, frightened at the terrible emphasis with which Philippe pronounced this word.

"Meantime rest, sister, from all the troubles, all the shame, which my mad curiosity has caused you. If I had known! oh, if I had known!" And he hid his face in his hands in fearful despair. Then suddenly looking up, "What have I to complain of?" said he, with a smile. "My sister is pure, she loves me; she has never betrayed confidence nor friendship. My sister is young like myself, kind like myself; we will live together, we will grow old together. Together we shall be stronger than the whole world!"

In proportion as the young man spoke in a manner to console Andrée, she became gloomy; she bent down her pale face; she took the attitude and settled look of dull despair, which Philippe had just shaken off so courageously. "You never speak but of us two!" she said, looking steadily, with her searching blue eyes upon her brother's changing countenance.

"Of whom would you have me speak, Andrée?" said the young man, meeting her look.

"But — we have a father; how will he treat his daughter?"

"I told you yesterday," Philippe coldly replied, "to forget all trouble, all fear, — to dismiss, as the wind dispels the morning mist, every memory and every affection except mine. Indeed, my dear Andrée, nobody in the world loves you but myself; I am loved only by you. Poor abandoned orphans, why should we bear the yoke of gratitude or relationship? Have we received kindness? Have we enjoyed the protection of a father? Oh!" he added, with a bitter smile, "you know my very thoughts, you know the state of my heart. If you must love him you speak of, I will say, 'Love him!' I am silent. Andrée, forbear."

"Then, brother, I must believe —"

"Sister, in great misfortunes man involuntarily hears those words so little understood in childhood, 'Fear God!' Oh, yes! God has cruelly recalled it to our memory! 'Respect thy father' — Oh, my sister, the strongest proof of respect you could give your father would be to blot him from your memory."

"It is true —" murmured Andrée, gloomily, leaning back in her chair.

"My dear, let us not waste time in useless words. Collect all your effects; Doctor Louis will see Madame la Dauphine, and inform her of your departure. The causes he will allege, you know, — the need of change of air, unaccountable suffering. Be all ready, I say, for departure."

Andrée arose. "The furniture?" she said.

"Oh, no, — linen, clothes, jewels."

Andrée obeyed. She set in order in the first place the boxes from the closet, the clothes from the wardrobe where Gilbert had hidden; then she took some jewel-cases which she was about to put in the principal box.

"What is that?" said Philippe.

"It is the casket of jewels sent me by the king, for my representation at Trianon."

Philippe turned pale on seeing the richness of the present.

"With only these jewels," said Andrée, "we can live respectably anywhere. I have heard that the pearls alone are worth one hundred thousand francs."

Philippe closed the casket. "They are indeed very valuable," he said. And taking the casket from Andrée's hands, "I think there are some other jewels, sister."

"Oh, my dear, they are not worthy to be compared with these; they adorned, however, the toilet of our mother fifteen years ago. The watch, the bracelets, the earrings, are enriched with brilliants. There is also the

portrait. Father wished to sell them all, because, he said, they were no longer fashionable."

"This is, however, all that remains to us," said Philippe, "our only resource. My sister, we will melt the gold articles; we will sell the jewels of the portrait. We shall thus have twenty thousand francs, which is a sufficient sum for the unhappy."

"But — this case of pearls is mine," said Andrée.

"Never touch those pearls, Andrée; they will burn you. Each one of these pearls is of a strange nature, sister; they stain the foreheads which they touch."

Andrée shuddered.

"I will keep this case, sister, to return it to whom it belongs. I tell you it is not our property, and we have no wish to claim it, have we?"

"As you please, brother," Andrée replied, with a shudder of shame.

"Dear sister, dress yourself for the last time to go to see Madame la Dauphine; be very calm, very respectful, and much affected at leaving so noble a protectress."

"Oh, yes! much affected," murmured Andrée, with emotion; "it is a great grief in my misfortune."

"I am going to Paris, sister, and I will return tonight; as soon as I arrive I will take you away. Pay all that you owe here."

"Nothing, nothing; I had Nicole, she has fled, — ah, I forgot the little Gilbert."

Philippe started, his eyes kindled. "You owe Gilbert?" he cried.

"Yes," said Andrée, naturally, "he has furnished me with flowers through the season. But, as you told me yourself, I have been at times unjust and harsh toward this fellow, who was after all polite. I will recompense him differently."

"Do not seek Gilbert," said Philippe.

"Why not? He must be in the garden; I will send for him then."

"No, no; you will lose precious time. I, on the contrary, shall meet him; I will speak to him; I will pay him."

"Very well, then, that will do."

"Yes, adieu until this evening;" and he kissed the hand of the young girl, who threw herself into his arms. He restrained even the beating of his heart in this gentle embrace.

Without delay Philippe departed for Paris, where the carriage set him down before the door of the little hôtel in the Rue Coq-Héron. Philippe knew that he should find his father there. The old man, since his strange rupture with Richelieu, had not found life tolerable at Versailles, and he sought, like all minds of exuberant activity, to beguile mental torpor by the excitement of change of place.

Now the baron, when Philippe rang at the gate of the court-yard, was pacing, with terrible oaths, the little garden of the hôtel and the court adjoining it. He started at the sound of the bell, and answered it himself. As he expected no one, this unforeseen visit gave him hope; the unhappy man in his fall caught at every branch. He therefore received Philippe with a feeling of spite and vague curiosity. But he had no sooner glanced at the face of his visitor than that dull pallor, those rigid lines, and that contracted mouth froze the reservoir of questions which he was prepared to open.

"You?" he said only, "and by what chance?"

"I shall have the honor of explaining to you, Monsieur," said Philippe.

"Good! is it serious?"

"Very serious; yes, Monsieur."

"This boy always has ceremonious ways that disturb me. Is it a misfortune, or is it good fortune, which you bring?"

"It is a misfortune!" Philippe said gravely. The baron staggered. "We are quite alone?" asked Philippe.

"Why, yes."

"Would you like to go into the house, Monsieur?"

"Why not in the open air under these trees?"

"Because there are some things which are not spoken of under the open sky."

The baron looked at his son, obeyed his silent gesture, and affecting to be unmoved, even smiling, he followed him into the hall, the door of which Philippe had already opened. When the doors were carefully closed, Philippe waited for a sign from his father to begin the conversation; and the baron being seated comfortably in the best chair in the salon, —

"Monsieur," said Philippe, "my sister and I intend to take leave of you."

"What!" said the baron, very much surprised, "you — you go away! And the service?"

"There is no more service for me. You know the promises made by the king have not been realized, — fortunately."

"I do not see any 'fortunately' about it."

"Monsieur — "

"Explain it to me; how can you be fortunate in not being colonel of a fine regiment? You carry your philosophy to extremes."

"I carry it so far as not to prefer dishonor to prosperity, that is all. But we will not enter upon considerations of this kind, if you please, Monsieur — "

"We will, *pardieu!*"

"I entreat you —" replied Philippe, with a firmness which signified, "I will not!"

The baron frowned. "And your sister, does she also forget her duties, — her service with Madame?"

"There are some duties which she must subordinate to others, Monsieur."

"Of what nature, Monsieur?"

"Of the most imperious necessity."

The baron rose. "It is a foolish sort of people," he growled, "they who make enigmas."

"Is all this that I am saying really an enigma to you?"

"Absolutely!" replied the baron, with a coolness that astonished Philippe.

"I will explain, then. My sister goes away because she is obliged to fly to avoid dishonor!"

The baron burst out laughing. "Oh, what model children I have!" he cried. "The son abandons the hope of a regiment because he fears dishonor; the daughter gives up a sure position because she is afraid of dishonor. Really, I have returned to the times of Brutus and Lucretia! In my time (a miserable time, doubtless, and not equal to these fine days of philosophy) when a man saw dishonor approaching in the distance; and when he, like you, carried a sword at his side; and when, like you, he had taken lessons from two masters and three provost-marshals, — he ran the first dishonor through with the point of his sword."

Philippe shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, it is hardly the thing to say to a philanthropist who does not like to see blood flow; but then, officers are not exactly born to be philanthropists."

"Monsieur, I know as well as you the necessities imposed by a point of honor; but the shedding of blood will not redeem —"

"Phrases, phrases of a philosopher!" said the old man, angry almost to the point of becoming majestic. "I think I was going to say of a coward!"

"You did well not to say so," replied Philippe, pale and trembling.

The baron met proudly the implacable and threatening look of his son. "I said," he replied, — "and my logic is not so bad as they would make me believe, — I said that all dishonor in this world comes, not from an action, but from the tattling about it. Ah, it is thus: If you are criminal before the deaf, the blind, the dumb, are you dishonored? You will answer me by that stupid line, 'The crime makes the disgrace, not the scaffold.' That is very well to say to children or women, but to a man, *mordieu!* we speak a different language. Now I imagine that I have created a man. So, then, if the blind man has seen anything, if the deaf man has heard, if the dumb man has spoken, you seize your sword, and you tear out the eyes of one, and the tympanum of another, and you cut out the tongue of the third, — this is how an attack of dishonor is met by a gentleman of the name of Taverney-Maison-Rouge!"

"A gentleman of that name, Monsieur, always knows that among all obligations the first is that of refusing to commit a dishonorable action; that is the reason why I will not reply to your arguments. But it sometimes happens that opprobrium springs from an inevitable misfortune; this is the case with my sister and myself."

"I come now to your sister. If, according to my system, man ought never to fly from a thing which he can fight against and conquer, woman ought also to stand firm. Of what use is virtue, Monsieur Philosopher, except to repel the attacks of vice? Where is the triumph of this same virtue, if not in the defeat of vice?" and Taverney began to laugh. "Mademoiselle de Taverney has

been much frightened, has she not? She feels very weak, then? If so — "

Philippe suddenly drew nearer. "Monsieur," he said, "Mademoiselle de Taverney has not been weak; she was overcome by force! She has fallen helpless into a trap."

"Into a trap?"

"Yes. Keep, I beg, a little of that fervor which animated you just now to blast those scoundrels who have basely plotted the ruin of this spotless honor."

"I do not understand — "

"You shall understand. A villain, I tell you, has introduced some one into the chamber of Mademoiselle de Taverney."

The baron grew pale.

"A villain," continued Philippe, "has resolved that the name of Taverney — mine, yours, Monsieur — should be soiled by an indelible stain. Well! where is your young man's sword to shed a little blood? Is it worth the trouble?"

"Monsieur Philippe — "

"Ah, fear nothing; I accuse no one, I know no one. The crime was plotted in the dark, accomplished in the dark; the result shall disappear in the dark, I am determined! — I who understand in my own way the glory of my house."

"But how do you know?" cried the baron, aroused from his stupor by the allurement of an infamous ambition, of an ignoble hope; "what indications have you?"

"It is a question which no one who may see my sister, your daughter, in a few months will ask, Monsieur le Baron!"

"But, then, Philippe," cried the old man, with eyes full of joy, "in that case the fortune and glory of our house have not vanished; in that case we shall triumph!"

"In that case, you are really the man I believed you."

said Philippe, with supreme disgust; "you have betrayed yourself, and you have failed in intelligence before a judge, after failing in heart before your son."

"Insolent!"

"Enough!" replied Philippe. "Tremble lest you awaken, in speaking so loud, the spirit, alas! too insensible, of my mother, who, if she had lived, would have watched over her daughter."

The baron lowered his eyes before the dazzling brightness which flashed from the eyes of his son. "My daughter," he continued after a moment, "shall not leave me without my consent."

"My sister will never see you again, father."

"Has she said so?"

"She sends me to inform you."

The baron wiped, with a trembling hand, his white and moist lips. "Be it so," he said. Then, shrugging his shoulders, "I have been unfortunate in my children," he cried, —"a fool and a brute."

Philippe made no reply. "Good, good!" continued Taverney; "I have no further need of you; go — if the thesis is recited."

"I had still two things more to say to you, Monsieur."

"Speak."

"The first is this; the king has given you a casket of pearls — "

"To your sister, Monsieur."

"To you, Monsieur. Besides, it matters little; my sister never wears such jewels. Mademoiselle de Taverney is not a prostitute; she begs you to return the casket to the one who gave it, or if you fear to disoblige his Majesty, who has done so much for our family, to keep it yourself."

Philippe handed the case to his father. The latter took

it, opened it, looked at the pearls, and threw it upon a chiffonniere. "What next?" he said.

"Then, Monsieur, as we are not rich; since you have pledged, or spent even, the property of our mother, for which I will not reproach you — God forbid — "

"You had better not," said the baron, grinding his teeth.

"But still, as we have only Taverney left of this moderate inheritance, we beg you to choose between Taverney and this little hôtel in which we are. Live in one, we will retire to the other."

The baron rumpled his lace frill with a rage which was betrayed only by the movement of his fingers, the moisture of his forehead, and the trembling of his lips. Philippe did not even notice it. He had turned away his head. "I prefer Taverney," said the baron.

"Then we will keep the hôtel."

"As you like."

"When will you set out?"

"This very evening; no, immediately."

Philippe bowed.

"At Taverney," continued the baron, "one may be a king with three thousand francs' income. I shall be twice king." He stretched his hand toward the chiffonniere to take the casket, which he put in his pocket. Then he went toward the door. Suddenly retracing his steps, he said, with a wicked smile, "Philippe, I permit you to sign our name to the first treatise of philosophy which you publish. As for Andrée — for her first work — advise her to call it Louis or Louise; it is a name which brings luck;" and he left with a sneer. Philippe, with bloodshot eye, head on fire, pressed the hilt of his sword, murmuring, "My God! give me patience, grant me forgetfulness!"

CHAPTER LI.

A CASE OF CONSCIENCE.

AFTER having copied with scrupulous care some pages of his "Réveries d'un Promeneur Solitaire," Rousseau had finished a frugal breakfast. Although a retreat had been offered him in the delicious gardens of Ermenonville, Rousseau, hesitating to submit to the slavery of the great, as he said in his mania of misanthropy, still lived in this little lodging of the Rue Plastrière with which we are acquainted.

On her part, Thérèse, having put in order her little house, had just taken her basket to go to market. It was nine o'clock in the morning. The housekeeper, according to her custom, came to ask Rousseau what he would like for dinner that day. Rousseau emerged from his revery, slowly raised his head, and looked at Thérèse like a man half-awake.

"Whatever you wish," he said, "provided there are cherries and flowers."

"We will see, — if all this is not too dear."

"Of course," said Rousseau.

"For indeed," continued Thérèse, "I do not know whether what you do is worth anything; but it seems to me that they do not pay you as formerly."

"You are mistaken, Thérèse. They pay me the same; but I get tired and work less, and then my bookseller is in arrears with me to the extent of half a volume."

"You will see that this one will make you bankrupt again."

"I hope not; he is an honest man."

"An honest man, an honest man! When you have said that, you think you have said all."

"I have said much, at least," replied Rousseau, smiling; "for I cannot say it of everybody."

"It is not surprising; you are so cross."

"Thérèse, we are wandering from the question."

"Yes; you want your cherries, gourmand! you want your flowers, sybarite!"

"What would you have, my good housewife?" replied Rousseau, with the patience of an angel; "my heart and my head are so bad that not being able to go out, I take delight at least in the sight of what God spreads over the country with bountiful hand."

Indeed, Rousseau was pale and exhausted, and his listless hands turned over the leaves his eyes did not read.

Thérèse shook her head. "Very well, very well," said she; "I am going out for an hour; remember that I shall put the key under the mat, and that if you need — "

"Oh, I shall not go out," said Rousseau.

"I know very well that you will not go out, since you cannot stand up; but I say this to you, that you may pay a little attention to persons who may call, and that you may answer the bell if it rings. You may be sure that it is not I."

"Thanks, good Thérèse, thanks; go."

The housekeeper went out, grumbling as usual; and the sound of her heavy and slow step was heard for a long time on the stairs. But as soon as the door was closed Rousseau took advantage of his seclusion to stretch him-

self deliciously on his chair, looked at the birds that pecked upon the window-sill at some crumbs of bread, and enjoyed the sunlight which shone in between the chimneys of the neighboring houses. His fancy, young and active, had no sooner felt its liberty than it spread its wings like the sparrows after their joyous repast. Suddenly the entrance door creaked on its hinges, which disturbed the philosopher's delightful repose. "What!" he said to himself, "already returned! have I slept, when I thought myself only dreaming?"

The door of the cabinet slowly opened in its turn. Rousseau turned his back to this door; convinced that it was Thérèse who was entering, he did not trouble himself. There was a moment's silence. Then in the midst of this silence, "Pardon, Monsieur," said a voice that made the philosopher start.

Rousseau hastily turned round. "What, Gilbert!" he said.

"Yes, Gilbert; once more, pardon, Monsieur Rousseau."

It was, indeed, Gilbert,—but Gilbert pale, his hair dishevelled, his disordered garments scarcely covering his thin and trembling limbs. His appearance made Rousseau shudder, and drew from him an exclamation of pity which resembled anxiety. Gilbert had the fixed and eager eyes of hungry birds of prey; a smile of affected timidity contrasted with this look, as would the upper part of the eagle's solemn head with the lower portion of the cunning head of a wolf or fox.

"What have you come here for?" cried Rousseau, who did not like disorder, and regarded it in another as the sign of an evil purpose.

"Monsieur, I am hungry," replied Gilbert.

Rousseau shuddered at hearing the sound of this voice, uttering the most terrible word in the human language.

"And how did you get in here?" he asked. "The door was locked."

"Monsieur, I knew that Madame Thérèse generally puts the key under the mat. I waited until Madame Thérèse had gone out, for she does not like me, and perhaps would have refused to receive me or take me to you; then, when you were alone, I came up, took the key from its hiding place, and here I am."

Rousseau raised himself on the two arms of his chair.

"Listen to me," said Gilbert, "for a moment, one single moment; I swear to you, Monsieur Rousseau, that I deserve to be heard."

"Well," replied Rousseau, full of amazement at sight of this face, which no longer expressed any of the sentiments common to men.

"I should tell you that I am reduced to such an extremity that I do not know whether to steal, kill myself, or do something still worse. Oh, do not be alarmed, my master and protector," said Gilbert in a voice full of gentleness, "for I think, on reflection, that I shall die without having to kill myself. During the eight days since I fled from Trianon I have wandered in the woods and fields without eating anything but green vegetables or wild fruits. I am weak. I am perishing with fatigue and hunger. As for stealing, it is not from you that I shall attempt it; I like your house too well, Monsieur Rousseau. As for that third thing, oh! to accomplish it —"

"Well?" said Rousseau.

"Well, it needs resolution, which I have come here to seek."

"Are you mad?" cried Rousseau.

"No, Monsieur; but I am very unhappy, full of despair, and would have drowned myself in the Seine this morning, but for a reflection which occurred to me."

"What reflection?"

"Why, that you have written, 'Suicide is a robbery committed on mankind.'"

Rousseau looked at the young man as if to say to him, "Do you flatter yourself that I was thinking of you in writing this?"

"Oh, I understand," murmured Gilbert.

"I do not think so," said Rousseau.

"You mean to say, 'Would your death, yours, — the death of a worthless fellow, who possesses nothing, who does nothing, — be worthy to be called an event?'"

"That is not the question," said Rousseau, ashamed of being divined; "but you were hungry, I think."

"Yes; I said so."

"Well, since you knew where the door was, you also know where the bread is; go to the cupboard, take some bread, and go away."

Gilbert did not stir.

"If it is not bread you want, but money, I do not think you wicked enough to maltreat an old man, who was your protector, in the very house that has given you shelter. Be satisfied, then, with this little — here;" and he offered him some pieces of money which he took from his pocket.

Gilbert stayed his hand. "Oh!" he said, with poignant grief, "it is a question neither of money nor bread; you did not understand what I meant when I spoke of killing myself. If I do not kill myself, it is because my life may now be useful to some one, — because my death might rob some one, Monsieur. You, who know all the social laws, all the natural obligations, tell me if there is in this world any tie which should bind a man to life who wishes to die!"

"There are many," said Rousseau.

"To be a father," murmured Gilbert, "is that one of the ties? Look at me while you answer, Monsieur Rousseau, that I may read it in your eyes."

"Yes," stammered Rousseau, — "yes, most certainly. Why this question from you?"

"Monsieur, your words will be a law to me," said Gilbert; "consider them carefully, I entreat you, Monsieur. I am so unhappy that I would like to kill myself; but — but I have a child!"

Rousseau started in astonishment.

"Oh, do not mock at me, Monsieur!" Gilbert said humbly; "you will think you are only pricking my heart when indeed you are opening it as with a poniard. I repeat it, I have a child!"

Rousseau looked at him without answering.

"But for this I should be already dead," continued Gilbert; "in this alternative I said to myself that you would give me good advice, and so I came."

"But," asked Rousseau, "why have I advice to give you? Did you consult me when you committed the fault?"

"Monsieur, this fault —" and Gilbert, with a strange expression, approached Rousseau.

"Well?" said the latter.

"This fault," replied Gilbert, "there are those who call it a crime."

"A crime! All the more reason, then, that you should not speak to me of it. I am a man like you, and not a confessor. Besides, what you tell me does not surprise me. I always foresaw that you would turn out badly; you have a wicked nature."

"No, Monsieur," replied Gilbert, shaking his head, gloomily, — "no, Monsieur, you are mistaken; my mind is unnatural, or rather, perverted. I have read many

books which taught me the equality of castes, pride of spirit, the dignity of instincts. These books, Monsieur, had so illustrious authors that a poor peasant like myself might well be led astray. I am lost."

"Ah, ah! I see what you are aiming at, Monsieur Gilbert."

"I?"

"Yes; you are blaming my doctrine. Have you not free will?"

"I do not blame, Monsieur; I say only that I have read. I blame my credulity; I believed, I fell. There are two causes for my crime,—you are the first, and I come, in the first place, to you; I shall next go to the second, but in his turn, and at the proper time."

"In short, what is it you ask of me?"

"Neither gifts, nor shelter, nor bread even, although I am an outcast and hungry. No, I ask of you moral support; I ask you to confirm your doctrine. I ask you to restore by a word my strength, which is broken down, not by inanition in my arms and legs, but by doubt in my head and heart. Monsieur Rousseau, I entreat you, therefore, to tell me if what I have felt for the past eight days is the pain of hunger in the muscles of my stomach, or if it is the torture of remorse in the organs of my mind. In committing a crime, Monsieur, I have begotten a child. Well, then, tell me, must I tear my hair in bitter despair, and roll in the dust crying, Pardon! or must I exclaim, like the woman in Scripture, 'I have done as others; if there is among men a better one than I, let him stone me'? In a word, Monsieur Rousseau, you who must have felt what I feel, answer this question. Say, say, is it natural for a father to abandon his child?"

Gilbert had no sooner spoken thus than Rousseau became paler than Gilbert himself, and losing self-control,

"What right have you to speak to me thus?" he stammered.

"Because, in your house, Monsieur Rousseau, in this garret where you showed me hospitality, I read what you have written on this subject; because you have declared that children born in misery belong to the State, which ought to take care of them; because, in short, you have always considered yourself an honest man, although you have not shrunk from abandoning children which were born to you."

"Miserable fellow," said Rousseau, "you have read my book, and you use such language to me!"

"Well?" said Gilbert.

"Well, you have a wicked mind joined to a wicked heart."

"Monsieur Rousseau!"

"You have misread my books, as you misread human life! You have seen but the surface of the pages, as you see only that of the face! Ah, you expect to make me an accomplice in your crime by citing to me the books I have written, — by saying to me, 'You confess having done this, therefore I may do it!' But, unhappy man, what you do not know, what you have not read in my books, what you have not divined, is that the whole life of him whom you take as an example, this life of misery and suffering, I could exchange for a gilded existence, — voluptuous, full of splendor and pleasure. Have I less talent than Monsieur de Voltaire, and could I not produce as much as he? By applying myself less than I do, could I not sell my books as dear as he sells his, and bring the money rolling into my coffer, keeping always a coffer half-full at the disposal of my book-sellers? Gold attracts gold; do you not know it? I also could have had a carriage for a young and beautiful mistress to ride in, and

you may be sure this luxury would not have dried up the source of an inexhaustible poesy. Have I not passions still? Observe carefully my eyes, which at sixty years yet glow with the ardors of youth and desire. You who have read or copied my books, come, do you not recall that in spite of the decline of years, notwithstanding very real and very serious troubles, my heart, still young, seems to have inherited, in order to suffer more, all the strength of the other parts of my organization? Weighed down with infirmities which prevent me from walking, I feel that I have more vigor and life for sustaining sorrow than I ever had in my youth for the reception of the rare felicities which God has bestowed upon me."

"I know all that, Monsieur," said Gilbert. "I have observed you closely and have understood you."

"Then, if you have observed me closely, if you have understood me, has not my life for you a meaning which others do not see? Does not this strange self-denial, which is unnatural to me, mean that I wish to expiate — "

"Expiate!" murmured Gilbert.

"Have you not understood," continued the philosopher, "that this misery having driven me in the very first place to make an unreasonable resolution, I have since been unable to find any other excuse for this resolution than disinterestedness and perseverance in misery? Have you not understood that I have punished my mind by humiliation? For it was my mind that was guilty, — my mind, which had recourse to paradoxes to justify itself, while on the other hand, I punished my heart by ceaseless remorse."

"Ah!" cried Gilbert, "it is thus you reply to me! it is thus that you philosophers, who fling your written precepts at mankind, plunge us in despair, and then blame us if we are angry with you! Eh! of what consequence is your humiliation to me, when it is secret; your remorse,

when it is unknown? Oh, woe! woe to you, woe! and may the crimes committed in your name fall upon your own head!"

"On my head, you say, curses, — and with them, punishment; for you forget the punishment. Oh, that would be too much! You who have sinned as I have, you condemn yourself as severely as you do me!"

"More severely even," said Gilbert; "for my punishment will be terrible; for since I have no longer faith in anything, I shall let my adversary, or rather my enemy, kill me, — a suicide which my misery recommends, which my conscience excuses; for now my death is no longer a robbery of mankind, and when you wrote that, you wrote what you did not think."

"Stop, unhappy man!" said Rousseau, "stop! have you not done harm enough with foolish credulity? Must you do more still with stupid scepticism? You have spoken to me of a child? You said that you were, or were about to be, a father?"

"I said so," repeated Gilbert.

"Do you realize what it is," murmured Rousseau, in a low voice, "to drag with you, not to death, but to shame, creatures born to breathe freely and innocently the pure air of virtue, a gift of God to every man born into the world? Let me tell you nevertheless, how horrible my condition is. When I abandoned my children, I imagined that society, which all superiority offends, would throw this wrong in my face as an ignominious reproach; then I justified myself with paradoxes; then I employed ten years of my life in advising mothers how to educate their children, — I who did not know what it was to be a father; in advising the nation how to make its citizens brave and honest, — I who had been weak and corrupt. Then one day the executioner, who avenges society, the nation, and the

orphan, unable to reach me, seized my book and burned it as a living shame to the country whose air it had poisoned. Decide, divine judge! was I right in action; was I wrong in my precepts? You do not answer; God himself would be perplexed, — God, who holds in his hand the unerring scales of justice. Well, I have a heart which solves the question; and this heart has said to me from its very depths: 'Woe to you, unnatural father, who have abandoned your children! Woe to you, if you meet the young prostitute who laughs brazenly at night at the street corners; for it may be your abandoned daughter, whom hunger has driven to infamy! Woe to you, if you meet in the street the arrested thief, with his guilt fresh upon him; for he may be your abandoned son, whom hunger has driven to crime!'"

After saying these words, Rousseau who had risen, fell back upon his chair. "And yet," he continued, with a broken voice which had the accent of a prayer, "I have not been as guilty as they believe; I have seen an unfeeling mother, an accomplice in my crime, forget like the animals, and I said to myself, 'God has allowed the mother to forget; it is therefore right for her to forget.' Well, I was at that time in error; and now — since you have heard me say to you what I never before said to any one — you must remain in error no longer."

"So," asked the young man, knitting his brow, "you would never have abandoned your children if you had had money enough to support them?"

"If only what was absolutely needful, — no, never; I swear it, never!" and Rousseau solemnly stretched his trembling hand toward heaven.

"Twenty thousand francs," asked Gilbert, "is that enough to support a child?"

"Yes; it is enough," said Rousseau.

"Good," said Gilbert; "thanks, Monsieur; now I know what remains for me to do."

"And in any event, young as you are, with your labor, you can support your child," said Rousseau. "But you have spoken of crime; they are looking for you, pursuing you perhaps?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Well, conceal yourself here, my boy; you are always welcome to the little garret."

"You are a man I love, Master!" cried Gilbert, "and your offer fills me with joy. Indeed, I ask only a shelter; as for my bread, I will earn it. You know that I am not an idler."

"Well," said Rousseau, appearing uneasy, "if the thing is settled, go up; do not let Madame Rousseau find you here. She never goes up to the garret now; for since your departure we lock up nothing. Your mattress is still there; make yourself as comfortable as possible."

"Thanks, Monsieur; if that is so I am more fortunate than I deserve to be."

"Now is that all you desire?" said Rousseau, looking toward the door.

"No, Monsieur; one word more, if you please."

"Speak."

"One day at Luciennes you accused me of having betrayed you; I did not betray any one, Monsieur, I was pursuing my love affair."

"Let us not speak of that. Is that all?"

"Yes; now, Monsieur Rousseau, when we are ignorant of the address of any one at Paris, can we obtain it?"

"Undoubtedly, when that person is known."

"He of whom I speak is very well known."

"His name?"

"Monsieur le Comte Joseph Balsamo."

Rousseau shuddered; he had not forgotten the meeting in the Rue Plastrière. "What do you want with this man?" he asked.

"A very simple thing. I have accused you — you, my master — of being morally the cause of my crime, since I believed I was only obeying a natural law."

"And I have undeceived you?" cried Rousseau, trembling at the idea of this responsibility.

"You have enlightened me, at least."

"Well, what were you going to say?"

"That my crime had not only a moral cause, but also a physical one."

"And this Comte de Balsamo is the physical cause, is he not?"

"Yes. I have copied examples, I have seized an opportunity; and in this — I see it now — I have acted like a wild animal, and not like a man. You gave me the example; Monsieur le Comte de Balsamo, the opportunity. Do you know where he lives?"

"Yes."

"Give me his address, then."

"Rue Saint Claude."

"Thanks; I shall go to his house immediately."

"Take care, child," exclaimed Rousseau; "he is powerful and adroit."

"Fear nothing, Monsieur Rousseau. I am determined, and you have taught me to keep my temper."

"Quick, quick, — go upstairs!" cried Rousseau; "I hear the gate shut; it is, doubtless, Madame Rousseau coming in. Hide yourself in the garret until she has come in, then you can go away."

"The key, if you please?"

"On the nail, in the kitchen, as usual."

"Adieu, Monsieur, adieu."

"Take some bread; I will prepare you some work for to-night."

"Thanks!" And Gilbert slipped out so quickly that he was already in his garret before Thérèse had reached the second floor.

Furnished with the precious information given him by Rousseau, Gilbert made no delay in putting his project into execution. Indeed, Thérèse had no sooner closed the door of her apartment than the young man, who from the door of his garret had watched all her movements, descended the stairs as rapidly as if he had not been weakened by a long fast. His head was full of hopeful plans, of bitter memories, and over all hovered an avenging spirit which spurred him on with its complaints and accusations. He arrived at Rue Saint Claude in a state difficult to describe. As he entered the court of the hôtel, Balsamo was accompanying to the door the Prince de Rohan, who was paying his generous alchemist a visit. As the prince was leaving, stopping once more to renew his thanks to Balsamo, the poor ragged fellow slipped in like a dog, not daring to look about him for fear of being dazzled.

The carriage of Prince Louis awaited him on the boulevard; the prelate slowly crossed the space that separated him from his carriage, which rapidly rolled away as soon as the door was closed upon him. Balsamo had looked after him sadly, and when the carriage had disappeared he turned toward the steps, upon which stood a sort of beggar in the attitude of supplication. Balsamo stepped up to him, and although his lips were silent, his expressive look was an interrogatory.

"A quarter of an hour's audience, if you please, Monsieur le Comte," said the young man in the ragged clothes.

"Who are you, my friend?" asked Balsamo, with supreme gentleness.

"Do you not recognize me?" asked Gilbert.

"No, — but no matter; come," replied Balsamo, not disturbed by the strange expression of the solicitor, any more than by his ragged garments and his importunity. Walking before him he led him into the nearest apartment, where, seating himself, without change of tone or expression, he said, "You asked if I recognized you?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte."

"Indeed, I think I have seen you somewhere."

"At Taverney, Monsieur, when you came there on the night before the arrival of the dauphiness."

"What were you doing at Taverney?"

"I lived there."

"As servant of the family?"

"No; as member of the family."

"You have left Taverney?"

"Yes, Monsieur; nearly three years since."

"And you came —"

"To Paris, where at first I studied with Monsieur Rousseau; after which I was placed in the gardens at Trianon in the capacity of under-gardener, through the influence of Monsieur de Jussieu."

"These are great names you mention, my friend. What do you want with me?"

"I will tell you;" and pausing, he looked at Balsamo steadily. "Do you remember," he continued, "coming to Trianon during the night of the great storm, six weeks ago next Friday?"

Balsamo's seriousness was changed to melancholy, as he said, "Yes, I remember; you saw me there, perhaps?"

"I saw you."

"Then you come to be paid for the secret?" said Balsamo, in a threatening tone.

"No, Monsieur; for I am more interested than you in keeping this secret."

"Then you are the one they call Gilbert?" said Balsamo.

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte."

Balsamo looked with long and searching gaze at the young man whose name carried with it so terrible a charge. He was surprised, he who was a judge of men, at the assurance of his bearing, at his dignity of speech. Gilbert was standing before a table upon which he did not lean. One of his thin hands, white, even though accustomed to garden work, was hidden in his bosom; the other fell gracefully at his side.

"I see by your countenance," said Balsamo, "why you have come here; you know that Mademoiselle de Taverney has brought a terrible charge against you, that by the aid of science I have forced her to tell the truth; you have come to upbraid me for obtaining this evidence, have you not? to reproach me with this conjuring of a secret which, but for me, would have remained buried in darkness as in a tomb?"

Gilbert only nodded his head.

"You are wrong, however," continued Balsamo; "for, admitting that I had wished to inform against you without being driven to it in my own interest, — for they accused me, — admitting that I had treated you as an enemy, that I had attacked you while defending myself; admitting, I say, all this, you have no right to say anything, for indeed you have committed a base deed."

Gilbert tore his breast with his finger-nails, but answered nothing.

"The brother will pursue you, and the sister will have

you killed," replied Balsamo, "if you have the imprudence to walk as you do about the streets of Paris."

"Oh, as to that, it is of little consequence to me," said Gilbert.

"What! of little consequence to you?"

"Yes; I loved Mademoiselle Andrée. I loved her as no other will ever love her; but she scorned me, — me whose sentiments for her were so respectful; she scorned me, — me who had already held her twice in my arms without even daring to touch with my lips the hem of her dress."

"Precisely, and you have made her pay for this respect, you have avenged yourself for her scorn, by what, — by a snare?"

"Oh, no, no! the snare did not originate with me; an opportunity for committing the crime was furnished me."

"By whom?"

"By you."

Balsamo drew himself up as if a serpent had stung him. "By me?" he cried.

"By you; yes, Monsieur, by you," repeated Gilbert. "Monsieur, you magnetized Mademoiselle Andrée; then you fled. As you went away, her limbs failed her, and she fell. I took her in my arms to carry her to her chamber; I felt her body touching mine, — that contact would have animated a marble statue! I, who loved, yielded to my love. Am I then so criminal as they say, Monsieur? I ask it of you, — of you, the cause of my misfortune."

Balsamo fixed upon Gilbert a look filled with sadness and pity. "You are right, child," he said; "it is I who have caused your crime and the misfortune of this young girl."

"And instead of providing a remedy for it, — you who are so powerful, and who ought to be so good, — you have

aggravated the misfortune of the young girl, you have exposed the criminal to death."

"It is true," replied Balsamo, "and what you say is reasonable. For some time past, look you, young man, I have been a thing accursed, and all the projects of my brain assume, when executed, threatening and pernicious forms. This is the consequence of misfortunes that I also have suffered, and which you do not comprehend. At the same time it is no reason why I should make others suffer; tell me what you want."

"I ask the means of repairing all, Monsieur le Comte, — crime and misfortune."

"You love this young girl?"

"Oh, yes!"

"There are many kinds of love. In what way do you love her?"

"Before possessing her, I loved her to distraction; now, I love her madly. I should die of grief if she received me with anger; I should die of joy if she allowed me to kiss her feet."

"She is of noble birth, but she is poor," said Balsamo, reflecting.

"Yes."

"Yet her brother is a man of heart, who, I think, cares but little for the prerogative of birth. What would happen if you asked this brother for his sister in marriage?"

"He would kill me," Gilbert replied coldly; "however, as I desire death more than I fear it, if you advise me to make this demand, I will do so."

Balsamo considered. "You are a man of sense," he said, "and we may say that you are a man of heart, although your action was really criminal, my complicity apart. Well, seek out not Monsieur de Taverney the son, but the Baron de Taverney, his father, and say to him that on

the day he permits you to marry his daughter, you will bring a dowry to Mademoiselle Andrée."

"I cannot say that, Monsieur le Comte; I have nothing."

"And I tell you that you shall bring her a dowry of one hundred thousand crowns, which I will give you to repair the misfortune and the crime, as you said just now."

"He will not believe me; he knows that I am poor."

"Well, if he does not believe you, show him these bank-notes, and he will no longer doubt." While saying this, Balsamo opened the drawer of a table, and counted thirty notes of ten thousand francs each. He then handed them to Gilbert.

"And is this money?" said the young man.

"Read."

Gilbert cast an eager glance at the roll he was holding in his hand, and saw the truth of what Balsamo said. A joyful light shone in his eyes. "It may be possible!" he cried. "But, no; such generosity would be too sublime."

"You are distrustful," said Balsamo; "you are right; but accustom yourself to choose your subjects for suspicion. Take, then, these hundred thousand crowns, and go to Monsieur de Taverney."

"Monsieur," said Gilbert, "while such a sum is given by word only I cannot believe in the reality of the gift."

Balsamo took a pen and wrote:—

I give to Gilbert as dowry, the day he signs his contract of marriage with Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney, the sum of one hundred thousand crowns, which I have delivered him in advance, in the hope of a successful negotiation.

JOSEPH BALSAMO.

"Take this paper, go, and doubt no longer."

Gilbert received the paper with a trembling hand, "Mon-

sieur," he said, "if I owe you so much happiness, you shall be the god I will worship upon the earth."

"There is but one God to worship," Balsamo answered seriously, "and I am not he. Go, my friend."

"A last favor, Monsieur."

"What is it?"

"Give me fifty francs."

"You ask me for fifty francs when you already have three hundred thousand in your hand?"

"These three hundred thousand francs are not mine," said Gilbert, "until the day when Mademoiselle Andrée consents to marry me."

"And for what are these fifty francs?"

"To purchase a decent coat in which I may present myself to the baron."

"There, my friend," said Balsamo; and he gave him the fifty francs. Upon this he dismissed Gilbert, and with the same slow and melancholy step returned to his apartments.

CHAPTER LII.

GILBERT'S PROJECTS.

ONCE in the street, Gilbert's feverish imagination was cooled, which at the last words of the count had carried him beyond not only the probable, but also the possible. Arrived at the Rue Pastourel, he sat down upon a milestone, and casting his eyes about him to assure himself that he was not watched, he drew from his pocket the bank-notes all rumpled by the pressure of his hand. A terrible thought had occurred to him, and brought the perspiration to his brow. "Let us see," he said, looking at the notes, "if this man has not deceived me; let us see if he has not set a trap for me; let us see if he does not send me to certain death under pretence of securing my happiness; let us see if he does not treat me as they do the sheep which they allure to the shambles by offering it a bunch of flowering herbs. I have heard it said that there are a great many false notes in circulation, with which the roués of the court cheat the girls of the opera. Let us see if the count has not taken me for a dupe." And he took out of the roll one of the notes of ten thousand francs; then going into a shop, he asked, showing the note, the address of a banker who would change it, having been charged with this commission by his master, he said.

The shop-keeper looked at the note, turned it over and over admiringly, — for it was a magnificent sum, and his

shop was small; then he directed him to the banker in the Rue Sainte Avoie, — therefore the note was good.

Gilbert, happy and elated, gave reins to his imagination, secured more carefully than ever the roll of bills in his handkerchief, and noticing in the Rue Sainte Avoie a dealer in second-hand clothes whose display attracted him, he purchased, for twenty-five francs, — that is, for one of the two louis Balsamo had given him, — a complete suit of maroon cloth whose neatness pleased him, a pair of black silk stockings, a little faded, and shoes with bright buckles; a good linen shirt completed the costume, neat rather than rich, at which Gilbert gave one admiring glance in the mirror of the establishment. Then, leaving his old garments in addition to the twenty-five francs, he put the precious handkerchief in his pocket, and went from the shop of the tailor to that of the hair-dresser, who in a quarter of an hour made this very remarkable head of Balsamo's protégé elegant, and even beautiful.

At last, when all these operations had been accomplished, Gilbert bought a small loaf in a baker's shop near the Place Louis XV., and ate it quickly as he took the road to Versailles. At the fountain of the Conférence he stopped to drink. Then he continued his journey, refusing every proposition of the coachmen, who could not comprehend why a young man so neatly dressed should wish to save fifteen sous at the expense of his polished shoes. What would they have said if they had known that this young man who was travelling on foot had in his pocket three hundred thousand francs? But Gilbert had his reasons for travelling on foot, — in the first place, his firm resolution not to spend more than was absolutely necessary; secondly, the need of seclusion to indulge at his pleasure in pantomime and monologues. God alone knows what happy dreams of the future filled the head of

this young man during his walk of two hours and a half. In this time he had walked more than four leagues without noticing the distance, without feeling the least fatigue, so vigorous was his constitution.

All his plans were made, and he had determined to introduce his demand in the following manner: To approach Taverney with ceremonious words; then, when he had the authority of the baron, to address Mademoiselle Andrée with so much eloquence that she would not only pardon him, but would conceive a respect and affection for the author of the pathetic speech he had prepared. The more he thought of it, the more hope triumphed over fear; and it seemed impossible to Gilbert that a girl in Andrée's position should not accept the reparation offered by love, when this love was accompanied by a fortune of one hundred thousand crowns.

Gilbert, in building these castles in the air, was as innocent and honest as the most simple child of primitive times. He forgot all the wrong he had done, and was perhaps more true-hearted than one would think. All these batteries prepared, he arrived with anxious heart at the grounds of Trianon. Once there, he was ready for everything, — for the first wrath of Philippe, which the generosity of his proposal must, he thought, assuage; for the first disdain of Andrée, which must yield to his love; for the first insults of the baron, which his gold would soothe.

Indeed, Gilbert, quite removed from the society in which he had lived, knew instinctively that three hundred thousand francs in his pockets was a safe armor. What he dreaded most was the sight of Andrée's sufferings; in presence of this misfortune only he feared his weakness, — a weakness that would take from him a part of the means necessary for the success of his cause. He entered the

gardens, looking, not without pride, which suited his face well, upon all these workmen, yesterday his companions, to-day his inferiors. The first question he asked was in reference to the Baron de Taverney. He addressed himself naturally to the lackey on service at the offices.

"The baron is not at Trianon," replied the latter.

Gilbert hesitated a moment. "And Monsieur Philippe?" he asked.

"Oh, Monsieur Philippe has gone away with Mademoiselle Andrée!"

"Gone away!" cried Gilbert.

"Yes."

"Mademoiselle Andrée has gone, then?"

"Five days ago."

"To Paris?"

The lackey made a movement as if to say, "I know nothing about it."

"What! you know nothing about it?" cried Gilbert. "Mademoiselle Andrée has gone away without any one knowing where she was going? There must be a reason for her going away, however."

"What nonsense!" replied the lackey, showing little respect for Gilbert's maroon coat; "of course there was a cause for her going away."

"And why did she go?"

"For change of air."

"For change of air?" repeated Gilbert.

"Yes; it seemed that the air of Trianon did not agree with her, and by the doctor's orders she has left Trianon."

It was useless to question further; it was evident that the lackey had said all that he knew about Mademoiselle de Taverney. And yet Gilbert, amazed, could not believe what he had heard. He ran to Andrée's chamber, and found the door closed. Fragments of glass, bits of straw

and hay, threads from the mattress strewing the floor, proved to him plainly that there had been a removal. Gilbert entered his old chamber, which remained just as he had left it. Andrée's window was open to admit air to the apartment; he could look through into the antechamber. The apartment was quite empty.

Gilbert then gave way to extravagant grief; he beat his head against the wall, he wrung his hands, he rolled on the floor. Then like a madman, he rushed out of the garret, descended the stairs as if he had wings, plunged into the woods, his hands clutching his hair, and with cries and imprecations he fell down in the midst of the bushes, cursing life and those who had given him birth.

"Oh, it is over, all over!" he murmured. "God does not wish me to find her again; God wishes me to die of remorse, of despair and love. Thus I shall expiate my crime; thus I shall avenge her whom I have wronged. Where can she be? At Taverney! Oh, I will go, I will go! I will go even to the end of the world; I will mount to the clouds, if necessary. Oh, I will trace her, and follow her even if I sink by the way from hunger and fatigue!"

But relieved by degrees by this outburst of grief, Gilbert arose, breathed more freely, looked about him more calmly, and continued at a slow pace his journey to Paris, which he was five hours in accomplishing.

"The baron," he said to himself, with some show of reason, "may not have left Paris; I will speak to him. Mademoiselle Andrée has fled. Indeed, she could not remain at Trianon; but her father must know where she has gone. A word from him will put me on her track; and besides he may recall his daughter if I can succeed in satisfying his avarice."

Gilbert, strong in this new idea, entered Paris about

seven o'clock, — that is, at about the hour when the crowd in the Champs-Élysées were enjoying the cool evening air, when Paris fluctuated between the early fogs of evening and the *first* rays of *that* artificial light which extended the day to twenty-four hours.

The young man, carrying out his resolution, went directly to the door of the little hôtel in the Rue Coq-Héron, and knocked without waiting a moment. Silence only answered him. He redoubled his knocks, but without result. This last resource, then, upon which he had relied, had failed him. Mad with rage, biting his hands to punish his body for suffering less than his soul, Gilbert quickly turned the corner of the street, pushed the spring of Rousseau's door, and ascended the stairs. The handkerchief which enclosed the thirty bank-notes also held the key of the garret door. Gilbert rushed in, as he would have thrown himself into the Seine if it had been there. Then, as the evening was fine and the fleecy clouds were sporting in the azure of the sky, as a sweet perfume rose from the lime and chestnut trees in the evening twilight, as the bat beat with its silent wings on the panes of the little window, Gilbert, recalled to life by all these sensations, approached the window, and seeing in the midst of the trees the pavilion of the garden, where once he found Andrée whom he thought to be forever lost, his heart was at the point of breaking, and he fell almost fainting on the edge of the gutter, lost in vague and stupid contemplation.

CHAPTER LIII.

A VAIN STRUGGLE; IN WHICH GILBERT FINDS THAT IT IS EASIER TO COMMIT A CRIME THAN TO CONQUER A PREJUDICE.

As the sensation of grief which had had possession of Gilbert decreased, his ideas became clearer and more definite. In the mean time the increasing darkness prevented him from distinguishing anything; then an unconquerable desire seized him to see the trees, the house, the walks, which the darkness blended into one mass, over which the air wandered as over an abyss. He remembered that one evening, in happier times, he had wished to procure news of Andrée, to see her, to hear her speak even, and that at the peril of his life, suffering still from a sickness which followed the thirtieth of May, he had slid down by the gutter-pipe from the second floor to the bottom, — that is, into the blessed garden itself. At that time there was great danger in forcing a way into that house in which the baron lived, and where Andrée was so well guarded; and yet Gilbert remembered how delightful the situation was, in spite of its danger, and how joyously beat his heart when he heard the sound of her voice. "What if I should do it again," he said to himself; "what if I should go once more, and on my knees search the sanded paths for the adored footprints of my mistress."

This word Gilbert spoke almost aloud, taking a strange pleasure in uttering it. He interrupted his monologue to look searchingly at the place where he thought the pavilion

should be. Then, after a moment's silence and investigation, "There is no indication," he added, "that the pavilion is inhabited by other tenants, — neither light, nor sound, nor open doors. I will go!"

Gilbert had the merit of quickly putting into execution a resolution once formed. He opened the door of the garret, descended on tiptoe like a sylph to the door of Rousseau, and having reached the second floor he boldly seized the gutter-pipe and slid to the ground, at the risk of ruining the pair of breeches new that morning. Having reached the foot of the trellis he experienced once more all the emotions of his first visit to the pavilion; the gravel creaked under his feet, and he recognized the little door by which Nicole had introduced Monsieur de Beausire. At last he went to the steps to press his lips upon the brass button of the window-blind, saying to himself that doubtless Andrée's hand had touched this button. Gilbert's crime had turned his love into a sort of religion.

Suddenly a sound from the inside startled the young man, — a faint and dull sound like that of a light step on the floor. Gilbert retreated. His face was livid; and for the past eight or ten days he had been so distressed in mind that, on seeing a glimmer of light through the door, he thought that superstition — that daughter of ignorance and remorse — held before his eyes one of her sinister torches, and that it was this torch which was shining through the slats of the blinds. He imagined that his soul, laden with terror, conjured another soul, and that one of those hallucinations which visit madmen or enthusiasts had now come upon him. Nevertheless the step and the light approached nearer. Gilbert saw and heard without belief. But the blind suddenly opening, just when the young man drew near to look through the slats, he was thrown by the shock against the wall; he uttered

a loud cry and fell upon his knees. It was not so much the shock which prostrated him thus as the sight exposed to his view; in this house, which he thought deserted, at the door of which he had knocked without answer, he had just seen Andrée.

The young girl, for it was she and not a spirit, uttered a cry as Gilbert had; then, less frightened, for she doubtless expected some one; "What is it?" she asked. "Who are you? What do you want?"

"Oh, pardon, pardon, Mademoiselle!" murmured Gilbert, his face humbly turned toward the ground.

"Gilbert, Gilbert here!" cried Andrée, with a surprise free from fear or anger; "Gilbert in this garden! Why have you come here, my friend?"

This last title vibrated painfully in the heart of the young man. "Oh!" he said, with emotion, "do not crush me, Mademoiselle; be merciful, I have suffered so much!"

Andrée looked at Gilbert in astonishment, and like a woman who did not understand such humility. "In the first place," she said, "get up, and explain to me why you are here."

"Oh, Mademoiselle," cried Gilbert, "I will not rise until you have pardoned me!"

"What have you done to me that I should pardon you? Speak, explain yourself. At all events," she continued, with a sad smile, "as the offence cannot be great, the pardon will be easy. Did Philippe give you the key?"

"The key?"

"Certainly; it was agreed that I should admit no one in his absence, and he must have given you the means to enter, unless you have climbed over the walls."

"Your brother, Monsieur Philippe?" stammered Gilbert. "No, no, it is not he; but never mind your brother,

Mademoiselle. You have not gone away, then? you have not, then, left France? Oh, happiness! unhoped for happiness!"

Gilbert had risen on one knee, and with arms extended, he returned thanks to Heaven with strange earnestness.

Andrée leaned toward him and looking at him uneasily, she said, "You speak like a madman, Monsieur Gilbert, and you will tear my dress; let go my dress, I beg you, and put an end to this comedy."

Gilbert rose. "You are angry," he said; "but I must not complain, for I have deserved it well. I know that I ought not to have presented myself in this way; but I did not know that you were living in this pavilion; I believed it empty, solitary; what I came to seek was a remembrance of you, — nothing more. Chance alone — Indeed, I no longer know what I am saying. Pardon me; I wished to speak first to Monsieur your father, but he had disappeared."

Andrée made a movement. "To my father," she said; "and why to my father?"

Gilbert was deceived by this reply. "Oh, because I fear you too much," he said; "and yet I know very well that it is better that everything should be arranged between you and me; it is the surest way of repairing all."

"Repairing! what is that?" asked Andrée, "and what must be repaired? Speak!"

Gilbert looked at her with eyes full of love and humility. "Oh, do not be angry," he said; "certainly it is a great boldness on my part, I who am of so little consequence; it was a great boldness, I say, to look so high, but the injury is done."

Andrée started.

"The crime, if you will," continued Gilbert; "yes, the

crime, for really it was a great crime. Well, of this crime accuse fatality, Mademoiselle, but never my heart —"

"Your heart! your crime! fatality! You are mad, Monsieur Gilbert, and you frighten me."

"Oh, it is impossible that with so much respect, so much remorse, with bowed head, clasped hands, I can inspire in you any other sentiment than that of pity. Mademoiselle, listen to what I am about to say, and it is a sacred pledge I make before God and men. I wish my whole life to be consecrated to expiating the wrong of a moment. I wish your future happiness to be so great that it shall efface all the griefs of the past. Mademoiselle —" Gilbert hesitated. "Mademoiselle, consent to a marriage which will sanctify a criminal union."

Andrée drew back a step.

"No, no," said Gilbert; "I am not a madman; do not attempt to fly, do not snatch away the hands which I clasp; for pity's sake, consent to be my wife."

"Your wife?" exclaimed Andrée, believing that she herself had become mad.

"Oh," continued Gilbert, with heart-rending sobs; "oh, say that you pardon me that horrible night; say that my crime filled you with horror, but say also that you forgive me; say that my love, restrained so long, justified my crime!"

"Wretch!" exclaimed Andrée, with savage fury, "it was you, then? Oh, my God! my God!" and Andrée held her head between her hands as if to prevent the revolting thought from escaping.

Gilbert drew back silent and petrified before this beautiful and pale Medusa's face, which expressed both terror and astonishment.

"Was this misfortune reserved for me, my God!" cried the young girl, with growing excitement, "to see my name

doubly dishonored, — dishonored by the crime, dishonored by the criminal? Answer, wretch! answer villain! It was you, then?"

"She did not know it!" murmured Gilbert, astounded.

"Help! help!" cried Andrée, returning to her apartment. "Philippe! Philippe! here Philippe!"

Gilbert, who had followed her, gloomy and in despair, looked about him, seeking either a place in which to fall nobly under the blows he expected, or something with which to defend himself. But no one came at Andrée's call; she was alone in the apartment.

"Alone! oh, alone!" cried the young girl, in a burst of rage. "Away, villain; do not tempt the anger of God!"

Gilbert gently raised his head. "Your anger," he murmured, "is to me the most fearful of all anger; do not overwhelm me, then, Mademoiselle, have pity!" and he clasped his hands in supplication.

"Assassin! assassin!" screamed the young woman.

"But you will not hear me, then?" exclaimed Gilbert. "Listen to me first at least, and have me killed afterward, if you wish."

"Listen to you! listen to you! — still more torture; and what have you to say? let me hear!"

"What I said just now; that I have committed a crime, — a crime very excusable to one who will read my heart, — and that I bring reparation for that crime."

"Oh!" cried Andrée, "this, then, is the meaning of the word which horrified me even before I comprehended it, — a marriage! I think that was what you said?"

"Mademoiselle!" stammered Gilbert.

"A marriage," continued the proud young girl, more and more excited; "oh, it is not anger I feel toward you, it is scorn, it is hatred! with this scorn there is a feeling so humiliating and at the same time so appalling that

I do not understand how any one living can bear the expression of it as I fling it in your face."

Gilbert turned pale; tears of rage sparkled on his eyelashes; his lips were pinched, whitening like two threads of pearl. "Mademoiselle," he said, trembling, "I am not of so little consequence that I cannot serve to repair the loss of your honor."

Andrée drew herself up. "If there were any question of the loss of honor, Monsieur," she said proudly, "it would be of your honor, not of mine. Such as I am, my honor is unsullied, and it would be in marrying you that I should be dishonored!"

"I did not think," said Gilbert, in a cold and incisive tone, "that a woman when she became a mother ought to consider anything in the world but the future of her child."

"And I do not suppose that you dare to interest yourself in that, Monsieur," retorted Andrée, with sparkling eyes.

"On the contrary, Mademoiselle, I am interested in it," replied Gilbert, beginning to rise from beneath the infuriated foot that trampled on him. "I am interested, for I do not wish this child to perish with hunger, as often happens in the houses of the great, where girls interpret honor in a manner of their own. All men are equal; some of the greatest men have proclaimed this maxim. That you should not love me I can conceive, for you do not see my heart; that you should scorn me I can conceive also, for you do not know my thoughts; but that you should refuse me the right to be interested in my child, I can never understand. Alas! in seeking to marry you I have not sought to satisfy a desire, a passion, an ambition; I have performed a duty, I have devoted myself to be your slave, I have offered you my life. Eh, *mon Dieu!* you would never have borne my name; had you wished, you might have continued to treat me as the gardener Gilbert; that would be just. But it would not be just for you to sacri-

fice your child. Here are three hundred thousand francs which a generous protector, who has judged me differently from you, gives me for a dowry. If I marry you this money belongs to me. Now, for myself, Mademoiselle, I need nothing but a little air to breathe if I live, and a hole in the ground to hide my body if I die. Everything else I give to my child. See, here are the three hundred thousand francs," and he laid the bunch of bank-notes on the table, almost under Andrée's hand.

"Monsieur," said Andrée, "you are making a serious mistake; you have no child."

"I?"

"Of what child are you speaking, then?" asked Andrée.

"Why, that of which you are the mother. Have you not admitted in the presence of two persons — your brother Philippe and the Comte de Balsamo — that you were enceinte, and that it was I, I, unhappy — "

"Ah, you heard that?" cried Andrée; "well, so much the better, so much the better. Then, Monsieur, this is my reply to you: You have basely done me violence; you have possessed me in my sleep; you have possessed me by a crime. I am a mother, it is true; but my child has only a mother, — do you understand? You have violated me, it is true; but you are not the father of my child," and seizing the bank-notes she threw them disdainfully out of the room, in such a manner that they touched in their flight the whitening face of the unhappy Gilbert. Then he felt an impulse of anger so profound that Andrée's good angel might well have trembled for her a second time. But that fury was restrained by its own violence, and Gilbert went out from Andrée's presence without even looking at her. He had no sooner passed over the threshold than she darted after him, and closed doors, blinds, windows, and shutters, as if by this violent action she would place the universe between the present and the past.

CHAPTER LIV.

RESOLUTION.

How Gilbert returned to his room; how, without expiring of pain and anger, he sustained the anguish of the night; how he rose without at least a blanching of his hair, — we shall not attempt to explain to the reader.

When daylight came Gilbert had a strong desire to write to Andrée and state to her all the arguments, so solid and so straightforward, which had sprung up in his mind during the night. But under too many circumstances already had he observed the young girl's unbending character to cherish now any further hope. Besides, to write would be a concession revolting to his pride; and his letter would perhaps be crumbled up and thrown away without being read; it might put upon his track a pack of furious, unintelligent enemies. He then thought that his proposition would perhaps be more favorably received by the father, who was avaricious and ambitious, or by the brother, who was a man of heart, and whose first movement alone was to be feared. "But," said he, to himself, "of what use to be supported by Monsieur de Taverney or by Monsieur Philippe, since Andrée will pursue me with her eternal 'I do not know you'? It is well," he added, "nothing now attaches me to that woman; she herself has taken pains to sunder the bonds that united us." He said this while rolling with anguish on his mattress, while recalling with rage the smallest details of Andrée's voice and face; he said this while suffering indescribable torment, for he loved her to distraction.

When the sun, already high above the horizon, penetrated the garret, Gilbert rose, excited by a last hope of seeing his enemy in the garden or even in the pavilion. It was still a joy in his misery. But suddenly a bitter flood of hatred, remorse, and rage overwhelmed his thought; he recalled all the scorn and contempt which the young girl had inflicted on him, and stopping in the middle of the room, by a command suddenly imposed by will on matter, "No," he said, "you shall not go to look out at that window; you shall not inhale that poison of which you would be glad to die. She is a cruel person, who never, when you bowed your head before her, smiled at you, or gave you a word of consolation or of friendship; who took pleasure in rending your heart, when still full of innocence and chaste love. She is a creature without honor and without religion, who has denied to her child its father, its natural support, and who condemns the poor little thing to neglect, to misery, to death, perhaps; because that child dishonors the womb in which it was conceived. Well, no, Gilbert; criminal as you were, amorous and base as you are, I forbid you to approach that window, or cast a glance in the direction of that pavilion. I forbid you to commiserate the fate of that woman, or to weaken the springs of your life by dwelling on what is past. Employ your life, like the brute, in work and the satisfaction of material wants. Make use of the time that will elapse between the affront and vengeance; and remember always that the only way to self-respect and to a position higher than that of these haughty nobles is to be more noble still than they."

Pale, trembling, urged by the impulses of his heart in the direction of the window, Gilbert nevertheless obeyed the command of his reason. He might have been seen moving little by little, slowly, step by step, toward the

door of the stairway. At last he went out on his way to Balsamo's house. But suddenly he returned, saying to himself, "Fool! wretched fool that I am! I spoke, I think of vengeance; and what is the vengeance I would have? Kill the woman? Oh, no; she would die happy in having inflicted on me an additional burden. Dishonor her publicly? Oh, that is a coward's way. Is there a sensitive place in that creature's soul where my needle thrust may cause as much pain as a thrust of a dagger? It is humiliation; she must be humiliated, — yes, for she has even more pride than I. How, then, can I humiliate her? I am nothing, I have nothing, and doubtless she is about to disappear. To be sure, my presence, my frequent appearance, my look of scorn or of defiance would punish her cruelly. I know well that a mother without pity must be a sister without heart, and she might send her brother to kill me. But what prevents my learning how to kill a man, as I have learned how to reason and to write? What prevents my overcoming Philippe, disarming him, and laughing in the face of the avenger, as in that of the offended person herself? No, that savors too much of comedy; in doing that one reckons on his skill and experience, without considering the intervention of God or of chance. Alone, I alone, with my bare arm, with my reason clipped of imagination, with the strength of my muscles given by nature, with the force of my mind, I will reduce to nothing the projects of those miserable — What does Andrée wish; what does she possess; what does she place before her for her defence and my injury? Let me think."

Then, sitting on the edge of the projection of the wall, bending forward and gazing with fixed eyes, Gilbert meditated profoundly. "Whatever might please Andrée," he said, "is what I detest; I must therefore destroy whatever

I detest. Destroy? Oh, no; my vengeance must never drive me to evil deeds; it must never persuade me to use fire or the sword. What, then, remains? This: to seek the cause of Andrée's superiority, — to discover by what chain she will restrain at the same time my heart and my arm — Oh, to see her no more! — to be no more looked upon by her! Oh, to pass within two steps of that woman when, smiling with her insolent beauty, she holds by the hand her child — her child who will never know me — Heavens and earth!"

Gilbert accentuated that phrase with a furious blow of the fist on the wall, and with an oath more terrible still. "Her child! here is the whole secret. It is not necessary that she should ever possess that child, whom she would accustom to execrate the name of Gilbert. It is necessary, on the contrary, for her to learn that the child will grow up execrating the name of Andrée. In a word, that child, whom she would not love, whom she would torture, perhaps, for she has a bad heart, — that child, with whom they would continually scourge me, Andrée must never see, but, losing it, she must rage and moan like a lioness deprived of her young."

Gilbert rose, handsome in his wrath and savage joy. "That is it," he said, extending his fist toward Andrée's pavilion. "You have condemned me to shame, to loneliness, to remorse, to love; I condemn you to suffering without result, to loneliness, to shame, to terror, to hate without vengeance. You will seek for me, — I shall have fled. You will cry out for your child, if only to tear it to pieces on recovering it; but it will be at least a rage of desire which I shall have kindled in your soul; it will be a blade without a hilt which I shall have plunged into your heart. Yes, yes; the child! I shall have the child. Andrée. I shall have, not your child, as you said,

but mine. Gilbert will have his child! — a child noble on the mother's side. My child! — my child!" and gradually he excited himself to transports of intoxicating joy. "Now," said he, "I have nothing to do with vulgar spite or pastoral lamentation; I have to do with a serious undertaking. There is no longer any reason to order my eyes not to seek yonder pavilion; I must order all my energy, all my soul, to watch, that the success of my enterprise may be assured. I will watch, Andrée," he said solemnly, and going nearer to the window, "day and night. You will not make a movement that I shall not see; you will not utter a cry of grief for which I shall not promise you a grief more bitter; you will not exhibit a smile to which I shall not reply by a sardonic and insulting laugh. You are my prey, Andrée; a part of you is my property. I watch, I watch!"

Gilbert then went to the window, and saw the blinds of the pavilion opened; then Andrée's shadow glide over the curtains and the ceiling of the chamber, reflected doubtless by some mirror. Presently Philippe entered, who had risen earlier, but who had been at work in his own room, situated behind Andrée's. Gilbert noticed that their conversation was animated. Doubtless they spoke of him, and of the scene of the evening before. Philippe walked about, showing signs of perplexity. That visit by Gilbert had perhaps induced them to modify their plans; perhaps they would go away in search of peace, obscurity, oblivion. At that idea Gilbert's eyes became luminous rays, which might have set fire to the pavilion and penetrated to the centre of the world.

But very soon a servant-girl entered by the garden-door; she brought a recommendation of some kind. Andrée came to an agreement with her, for she installed herself at once, with her little bundle of clothes, in the chamber

formerly occupied by Nicole. Furthermore, certain recent purchases of furniture, utensils, and provisions satisfied the vigilant Gilbert that the brother and sister intended to remain quietly in that habitation.

Philippe examined with close scrutiny the locks on the garden-door. What especially convinced Gilbert that he was suspected of having entered by using a false key, given him perhaps by Nicole, was that the locksmith, in Philippe's presence, changed the wards of the locks. It inspired Gilbert with the first joy he had experienced since these events began. He smiled ironically. "Poor creatures!" he murmured; "they are not very dangerous. They strengthen the lock, and do not even suspect that I had the daring to scale the wall. A poor idea they have of you, Gilbert! So much the better. Yes, proud Andrée, in spite of the locks on your door, if I wished to penetrate to you I could do it. But it is my turn for good fortune; I scorn you, and unless caprice —" He pirouetted on his heels, imitating the roués of the court. "But no," he continued bitterly, "this is more worthy of me; I want no more of you. Sleep in peace; I have what is better than possession of you, with which to torture you at my ease. Sleep!"

Gilbert left the window, and after giving a glance at his clothes, he descended the stairs, and started out to visit Balsamo.

CHAPTER LV.

THE FIFTEENTH OF DECEMBER.

GILBERT found no difficulty, as far as Fritz was concerned, in being admitted to Balsamo.

The count was resting on a sofa, like a rich and idle man, from the fatigue of having slept all night, — at least so Gilbert thought, seeing him lying there at so early an hour. The order must have been given to the valet to admit Gilbert whenever he should present himself, for he had no occasion to give his name.

As Gilbert entered, Balsamo rose upon his elbow and closed his book, which he held open without reading. "Oh, oh!" said he, "here is a fellow who is going to be married."

Gilbert did not answer.

"Good!" said the count, resuming his indolent attitude; "you are happy and almost grateful. You come to thank me; it is superfluous. Keep that, Gilbert, for new occasions. Thanks are a currency which is generally satisfactory when bestowed with a smile. There, my friend, there!"

There was in these words and in Balsamo's tone an accent mournful and gentle, which struck Gilbert as conveying at the same time a reproach and a revelation.

"No," he said; "you are mistaken, Monsieur. I am not to marry at all."

"Ah!" said the count, "what are you going to do? What has happened?"

"I have been rejected," replied Gilbert.

The count turned completely round. "You have misunderstood, my friend."

"No, Monsieur; I think not, at least."

"Who rejected you?"

"The young lady."

"Of course; why did you not speak to her father?"

"Because fate ordered otherwise."

"Ah, we are fatalist?"

"I have not the capacity for possessing faith."

Balsamo frowned, and looked at Gilbert with a sort of curiosity. "Do not speak of things of which you are ignorant," he said; "with men it is stupidity, with children it is presumption. I will permit you to have pride, but not to be an idiot; tell me that you have not the capacity to be a fool, and I will approve. In short, what have you done?"

"This: Like the poets, I wished to dream instead of act; I wished to walk in the avenues where I had enjoyed dreaming of love, and suddenly the reality presented itself to me before I was prepared for it. The reality killed me at once."

"Again it serves you right, Gilbert; for a man in such a situation as yours resembles the scouts of the army. Those men must march with the musket in the right hand and a dark-lantern in the left hand."

"In short, Monsieur, I have failed. Mademoiselle Andrée called me villain, assassin, and said that she would have me killed."

"Good! but her child?"

"She told me that the child was hers, not mine."

"What next?"

"Then I retired."

"Ah!"

Gilbert looked up. "What would you have done?" he said.

"I do not know yet. Tell me what you wish to do."

"To punish her for subjecting me to such humiliations."

"Mere words, that."

"No, Monsieur; it is a resolution."

"But you allowed her, perhaps, to wrest your secret from you, your money?"

"My secret is my own, and no one shall have it. The money is yours; I have brought it back," and Gilbert opened his vest and drew from it the thirty notes, which he counted carefully, spreading them out on Balsamo's table.

The count took them, folded them, all the time watching Gilbert, whose face betrayed not the slightest emotion. "He is honest; he is not covetous. He has sense, firmness; he is a man," he thought.

"Now, Monsieur le Comte," said Gilbert, "I have to give you an account of the two louis you gave me."

"Do not overdo it," replied Balsamo; "it is handsome to return one hundred thousand crowns; it is childish to return forty-eight francs."

"I did not wish to return them; I only wished to tell you what I had done with these louis, that you may know that I need others."

"That is different. You ask, then?"

"I ask."

"For what?"

"For means to do what just now you called 'mere words.'"

"Be it so. You wish to avenge yourself."

"Nobly, I think."

"I do not doubt it; but cruelly?"

"Yes, cruelly."

"How much do you need?"

"Twenty thousand francs."

"And you will not touch this young woman?" said Balsamo, expecting to check Gilbert by this question.

"I will not touch her."

"Her brother?"

"Neither her brother, nor her father."

"You will not calumniate her?"

"I will never speak her name."

"Good; I understand you. But it is equally as bad to kill a woman with continual insults, as to stab her with a weapon. You wish to defy her by showing yourself, by following her, by heaping upon her smiles full of insult and hatred."

"I have so little desire to do this, that I come to ask for means for crossing the sea without expense to myself, in case I should desire to leave France."

"Master Gilbert," exclaimed Balsamo, with eager and caressing tone, which contained however neither grief nor joy, — "Master Gilbert, it seems to me that you are not consistent with your display of disinterestedness. You ask me for twenty thousand francs, and from this sum you cannot take one thousand for passage money?"

"No, Monsieur; and there are two reasons for that."

"Let me hear the reasons?"

"In the first place, I shall not have a farthing on the day I embark; for mark this well, Monsieur le Comte, it is not for myself I ask it, — I ask it for the reparation of a wrong which you facilitated —"

"Ah, you are tenacious!" said Balsamo, with pinched lips.

"Because I am right. I ask you for money for reparation, I tell you, and not for my living or for my own comfort. Not a sou of these twenty thousand francs will touch my pocket; they have their destination."

"Your child; I see that —"

"My child; yes, Monsieur," replied Gilbert, with a certain pride.

"But yourself?"

"I am strong, free, and intelligent; I can always live. I wish to live."

"Oh, you will live! God never gives such strength of will to souls which are to leave this earth prematurely. God clothes warmly the plants which have to endure long winters; he gives armor of steel to hearts which must bear heavy trials. But you have, it seems to me, told me of two reasons for not appropriating one thousand francs, — in the first place, delicacy."

"Secondly, prudence. When I leave France, I must do so secretly. Now, I cannot succeed in this, if I seek out some captain in the port, paying him myself, — for I presume it is done in that way, — it is not, I say, by going out to sell myself that I shall succeed in hiding myself."

"Then you suppose that I can aid you in disappearing?"

"I know that you can."

"Who told you so?"

"Oh, you have too many supernatural means at your disposal not to have a whole storehouse of natural means. A sorcerer is never so sure of himself that he has not some haven of safety."

"Gilbert," said Balsamo, suddenly, extending his hand to the young man, "you are a bold, adventurous spirit; you are made up of evil and good like a woman; you are stoical and unaffectedly upright, — I will make a very great man of you. Stay here, I say; this hôtel is a safe asylum; besides, I leave Europe in a few months, — I will take you away."

Gilbert listened. "In a few months I would not decline your offer; but to-day I must say, Thanks, Monsieur

le Comte, your proposal is dazzling to a poor man; at the same time I refuse it."

"A moment's vengeance is worth more than a future of fifty years, perhaps?"

"Monsieur, while my fancy or my caprice possesses me it is always worth to me more than the whole universe; and besides vengeance, I have a duty to fulfil."

"There are your twenty thousand francs," replied Balsamo, without hesitation.

Gilbert took two bank-notes, and looking at his benefactor, "You give like a king!" he said.

"Oh, better, I hope," said Balsamo; "for I do not ask even to be remembered."

"But I am grateful, as you said just now; and when my task shall be accomplished, I will pay you these twenty thousand francs."

"How can you do that?"

"By putting myself in your service for as many years as will be required for a servant to pay his master twenty thousand francs."

"You are again illogical, Gilbert. You said to me a moment ago, 'I ask you for twenty thousand francs, *which you owe me.*'"

"That is true; but you have won my heart."

"I am glad of it," said Balsamo, coldly. "So, you will be mine, if I wish it?"

"Yes."

"What do you know how to do?"

"Nothing; but I am capable of everything."

"That is true."

"But I wish to have in my pocket the means for leaving France in two hours, if necessary."

"Ah, my service is then deserted."

"I shall be sure to return to you."

"And I shall be sure to find you again. Well, let us finish; it tires me to talk so long. Draw up the table."

"There it is."

Balsamo took from it some papers, and began to read half-aloud the following lines upon one of the papers, inscribed with three signatures, or rather three strange ciphers: "'The fifteenth of December, from Havre for Boston, P. J. the Adonis.' What do you think of America, Gilbert?"

"That it is not France, and that I shall be very glad to go by sea, at a certain moment, into any country whatever that is not France."

"Good! About the fifteenth of December; is not that the time to which you allude?"

Gilbert counted on his fingers, reflecting. "Precisely," he said.

Balsamo took a pen and wrote upon a fresh sheet these two lines, —

Receive upon the "Adonis" a passenger.

JOSEPH BALSAMO.

"But this paper is dangerous," said Gilbert, "and I who seek a shelter may find the Bastille."

"By having too much imagination one becomes absurd," said the count. "The 'Adonis,' my dear Monsieur Gilbert, is a merchant vessel of which I am the principal owner."

"Pardon me, Monsieur le Comte," said Gilbert, bowing; "I am indeed an unhappy fellow whose head is sometimes turned, — but never twice in succession. Pardon me, and believe in my gratitude."

"Go, my friend."

"Adieu, Monsieur le Comte."

"Au revoir," said Balsamo, turning away.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE LAST AUDIENCE.

In November, that is several months after the events we have related had taken place, Philippe de Taverney went out very early in the morning, considering the season, — that is to say, at daybreak, — from the house in which he lived with his sister. Already all the little Parisian industries were astir under the lamps still lighted. There were the little smoking cakes which the poor merchant from the country devours as a feast in the keen morning air, the trucks loaded with vegetables, the carts full of fish and oysters going to market; and there was, in all this bustle of the laborious crowd, a sort of restraint imposed upon the workmen by respect for the sleep of the rich.

Philippe hurried across the populous and crowded quarter in which he lived, to reach the Champs-Élysées, which was absolutely deserted.

The leaves were turning red upon the tops of the trees; the beaten walks of the Queen's Court, and the bowling-greens, abandoned at this hour, were hidden under a thick carpet of these rustling leaves.

The young man was dressed like the rich bourgeois of Paris, in a coat with long skirts, in breeches and silk stockings; he carried a sword; his carefully arranged hair indicated that he must have been in the hands of his hair-dresser long before daybreak. So, when Philippe saw that the morning wind was deranging his hair and scattering the powder, he threw a glance full of displeasure upon the

avenue of the Champs-Élysées, to see if any of the public carriages on this route were not already running. Nor did he have long to wait. A carriage worn out, faded, broken, drawn by a starved, dun mare, came jolting along the street; its driver, with a watchful eye and dejected expression, searched afar among the trees for a passenger, as Æneas watched for one of his vessels on the waves of the sea. On perceiving Philippe he applied his whip, and the carriage came up with the passenger.

"Arrange," said Philippe, "to have me at Versailles at nine o'clock precisely, and you shall have half a crown."

In fact, at nine o'clock Philippe had with the dauphiness one of those morning audiences which she had begun to give. Alert, and freeing herself from every law of etiquette, the princess was accustomed to inspect every morning the work which she was having done at Trianon; and meeting on her way the solicitors to whom she had granted an interview, she disposed of them rapidly, with a presence of mind and an affability which did not exclude dignity, sometimes even haughtiness, when she perceived that her condescension was misconstrued.

Philippe had at first resolved to make the journey on foot, for he was reduced to the severest economy; but the sentiment of self-respect, or perhaps only that of the respect, which no military man ever loses, for his correct appearance in the presence of a superior, had constrained the young man to dispense with economy for one day, that he might present himself properly at Versailles. He expected, indeed, to return on foot. So, on the same step of the ladder, starting from two opposite points, the patrician Philippe and the plebeian Gilbert had, as we may see, come together.

Philippe beheld again with heavy heart that Versailles,

still magical, where so many golden and roseate dreams had enchanted him with their promises. He beheld again, with broken heart, Trianon, memorial of misfortune and disgrace. At nine o'clock exactly, provided with his letter of audience, he sauntered in the little walk near the pavilion. He perceived, at a distance of a hundred paces, the princess conversing with her architect, enveloped in furs though the weather was not cold. The young dauphiness, with a little hat in the style of that worn by the ladies of Watteau, was distinctly outlined against the green hedges. At times the sound of her silvery and vibrating voice reached Philippe, and awakened in him sentiments which ordinarily efface all chagrin in a wounded heart.

Several persons, favored like Philippe with an audience, presented themselves one after another at the door of the pavilion, in the antechamber of which an usher came to seek them in their turn. Placed along the course of the princess, whenever she returned, with Mique upon her footsteps, these persons received a word from Marie Antoinette, or even the special favor of an exchange of several words spoken privately. Then the princess would wait for another visitor to present himself.

Philippe remained the last. He had seen already the eyes of the princess turning toward him, as if she tried to recognize him; then he blushed and endeavored to assume in his place a modest and patient attitude. The usher came to him at length, and asked if he would not also present himself, since Madame la Dauphine was about to go in, and once having returned she would receive no one. Philippe therefore went forward. The dauphiness did not lose sight of him while he advanced over that distance of a hundred paces, and he chose the most favorable moment to make his respectful salutation.

The dauphiness turned to the usher, saying, "The name of this person who salutes?"

The usher read the letter of audience. "Monsieur Philippe de Taverney, Madame," he replied.

"It is true," said the princess; and she looked at the young man with an expression of interest. Philippe stood in an attitude of deference.

"Good-day, Monsieur de Taverney," said Marie Antoinette; "how is Mademoiselle Andrée?"

"Quite ill, Madame," replied Philippe; "but my sister will be made happy by this evidence of interest your Highness deigns to show her."

The dauphiness did not reply. She read the traces of suffering on Philippe's pale and wasted features, and could scarcely recognize, in the modest garb of a citizen, that handsome officer who had first served her as guide upon the soil of France.

"Monsieur Mique," said she, approaching the architect, "we have, then, agreed concerning the ornamentation of the dancing-hall; the grove in the neighborhood is already decided upon. Pardon me for keeping you so long in the cold."

This was equivalent to a dismissal; Mique saluted and went away. The dauphiness bowed to those persons who still were waiting, and they immediately retired.

Philippe understood that signal to be addressed to him as well as to the rest, and already his heart was oppressed, when the dauphiness, coming to him, said, "You say, then, Monsieur, that your sister is ill?"

"If not ill, Madame, at least drooping."

"Drooping!" cried the dauphiness, with interest,—"she, in so good health!"

Philippe bowed. The young princess cast at him one of those searching glances which, in speaking of a man of

her rank, we should call an eagle's glance. Then after a pause, "Allow me to walk a little," said she; "the wind is chilly."

She advanced a few steps; Philippe remained in his place.

"What! you do not follow me?" said Marie Antoinette, turning.

Philippe made two bounds, and rejoined her.

"Why have you not sooner informed me of the condition of Mademoiselle Andrée, in whom I am interested?"

"Alas!" said Philippe, "your Highness has just said the word; your Highness was interested in my sister, but now —"

"I am interested in her still, Monsieur; and yet it seems to me that Mademoiselle de Taverney left my service unseasonably."

"Necessity, Madame!" said Philippe, in a low voice.

"What! that word 'necessity' is alarming; explain that word to me, Monsieur."

Philippe made no reply.

"Doctor Louis," continued the dauphiness, "has stated to me that the air of Versailles was injurious to the health of Mademoiselle de Taverney, which might be restored by a residence in the family home. This is all that I have learned. Now, your sister paid me but one visit before her departure. She was pale; she was sad. I must say that she showed me much devotion in that interview, for she wept copiously."

"Sincere tears, Madame," said Philippe, whose heart beat violently, "the source of which is not exhausted."

"I fancied," continued the princess, "that your father had compelled his daughter to come to court, and that the child regretted your country — some attachment —"

"Madame," Philippe hastened to say, "my sister regrets only your Highness."

"And she suffers — Strange illness, which the country air was to cure, and which it aggravates."

"I will not longer deceive your Highness," said Philippe; "my sister's illness is a profound sorrow, which has driven her nearly to despair. Mademoiselle de Taverney, however, loves in this world only your Highness and myself; but she begins to prefer God to all affections. And the audience which I have had the honor to solicit, Madame, is for the purpose of asking your aid respecting this desire of my sister."

The dauphiness raised her head. "She wishes to enter the religious life, does she not?"

"Yes, Madame."

"And you will suffer it, — you, who love that child?"

"I think I judge rightly her position, Madame; and this counsel came from me. Still, I love my sister too much for this counsel to be suspected, and the world will not ascribe it to avarice on my part. I have nothing to gain by Andrée's withdrawing to a cloister; neither of us possesses anything."

The dauphiness paused, and with a stealthy glance at Philippe, "That is what I was saying just now, when you would not understand me, Monsieur; you are not rich."

"Your Highness — "

"No false shame, Monsieur; the happiness of that poor girl is at stake. Answer me sincerely, like an honest man, — as I am sure you are."

The brilliant and loyal eyes of Philippe met the gaze of the princess, and were not lowered. "I will reply, Madame," he said.

"Well, is it through necessity that your sister wishes to leave the world? Let her speak. Good God! princes

are unfortunate. God has given them hearts to pity the suffering; but he has refused them that supreme clear-sightedness which can discover suffering under the veil of reserve. Answer, then, frankly; is that it?"

"No, Madame," said Philippe, with firmness, "it is not that; nevertheless, my sister wishes to enter the convent of Saint Denis, and we have but a third of the entrance-money."

"The entrance-money is sixty thousand francs!" cried the princess; "you have, then, only twenty thousand francs?"

"Hardly that, Madame; but we know that your Highness can, by a word, and without opening your purse, give admission to the convent."

"Certainly I can."

"This, then, is the single favor which I shall venture to solicit from your Highness, unless you have already promised to some one else your intercession with Madame Louise."

"Colonel, you surprise me strangely," said Marie Antoinette. "What! so near to me I have so much noble poverty! Eh, Colonel, you should not thus have deceived me."

"I am not colonel, Madame," replied Philippe, gently; "I am only your Highness's devoted servant."

"Not colonel, you say? And since when?"

"I have never been colonel, Madame."

"The king promised in my presence a regiment — "

"The commission for which was never sent."

"But you had a rank — "

"Which I have resigned, Madame, having fallen into disgrace with the king."

"Why?"

"I do not know."

"Oh!" said the dauphiness, with deep sadness,—"oh, the court!"

Philippe smiled sorrowfully. "You are an angel from heaven, Madame," he said; "and I regret not serving the house of France, that I might have an opportunity of dying for you."

A light so vivid and so warm came into the eyes of the dauphiness that Philippe hid his face in his hands. The princess did not even try to console him, or to draw from him the sentiment that overpowered him at that moment. Silent, and breathing with effort, she picked the petals of some Bengal roses, plucked from their stem by her nervous and trembling hand.

Philippe recovered himself. "Pardon me, Madame," he said.

Marie Antoinette did not reply to these words. "Your sister will enter Saint Denis to-morrow, if she wishes," she said, with feverish excitement; "and you in a month will be at the head of a regiment. I am determined."

"Madame," replied Philippe, "will you still have the goodness to hear me in my last explanations? My sister accepts the gift of your Royal Highness; as for myself, I must refuse it."

"You refuse?"

"Yes, Madame; I have received an affront from the court; the enemies who have inflicted it on me would find a way to wound me more severely, on seeing me in higher station."

"What! even under my protection?"

"Especially because of your gracious protection, Madame," said Philippe, resolutely.

"It is true," said the princess, turning pale.

"And then, Madame,—no, I forget, in speaking with you, that there is no more happiness on earth; I forget

that once entered into obscurity, I must no more leave it. In obscurity a man of heart prays and remembers."

Philippe pronounced these words with an accent that made the princess start. "A day will come," said she, "when I shall have the right to say what now I can only think. Monsieur, your sister may enter at Saint Denis whenever she pleases."

"Thanks, Madame, thanks."

"As to yourself — I wish you to make me a request."

"But, Madame — "

"I wish it."

Philippe saw the gloved hand of the princess extended toward him; it remained suspended, as if in expectation, perhaps it expressed only command. The young man knelt, took the hand, and slowly, with a swelling and palpitating heart touched it with his lips.

"The request! come!" said the dauphiness, so moved that she did not withdraw her hand.

Philippe bowed his head. A flood of bitter thoughts overwhelmed him. He remained some seconds silent and motionless; then, rising, pale and dull-eyed, "A passport to leave France," said he, "the day my sister enters the convent of Saint Denis."

The dauphiness recoiled as if terrified. Then, seeing all that grief, which doubtless she comprehended, which perhaps she shared, she could reply only by the words, hardly intelligible, "It is well." And she disappeared in an avenue of cypress-trees, the only ones that had preserved intact their everlasting leaves, a mantle of the tomb.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE CHILD WITHOUT A FATHER.

The day of pain, the day of shame drew near. Andrée, notwithstanding the visits, more and more frequent, of the good Doctor Louis, notwithstanding the affectionate care and consolations of Philippe, became continually more depressed, like the condemned whose last hour approaches. The unhappy brother sometimes found Andrée dreamy and trembling; her eyes were dry; for whole days she would not speak; then suddenly she would rise and make several turns around her chamber, trying, like Dido, to get away from herself, — that is to say, from the sorrow that was killing her.

At length, seeing her one evening paler, more uneasy, more nervous than usual, Philippe sent for the doctor to come at once. It was the twenty-ninth of November. Philippe had had the art to keep Andrée sitting up until a late hour; he had entered with her upon subjects of conversation the most gloomy, the most intimate, those even which the young girl dreaded, as the wounded man dreads a rough and heavy hand approaching his wound. He was sitting near the fire. The servant, on starting for Versailles to get the doctor, had forgotten to close the blinds, so that the reflection of the lamp, that of the fire even, cast a soft light on the carpet of snow thrown on the soil of the garden by the first frosts of winter.

Philippe waited till Andrée's mind began to grow calm, and then, without preamble, "Dear sister," he said, "have you at last come to a decision?"

"On what subject?" replied Andrée, with a sigh of pain.

"On the subject — of your child, sister."

Andrée started.

"The time approaches," continued Philippe.

"My God!"

"And I should not be surprised if to-morrow —"

"To-morrow?"

"To-day, even, dear sister."

Andrée became so pale that Philippe, alarmed, took hold of her and kissed her hand. She presently recovered, "Brother," she said, "I will not practise toward you the hypocrisies which dishonor vulgar souls. Expectation of good is in my mind confounded with expectation of evil. What is evil I no longer know, since I have lost confidence in what is good. So do not judge me more severely than one would judge a foolish person, — unless you prefer to take seriously the philosophy which I am about to outline to you, and which, I assure you, is the perfect, consummate expression of my sentiments as I gather it from my experience."

"Whatever you may say, Andrée, whatever you may do, you will always be to me the dearest, the most respected of women."

"Thank you, my only friend. I dare to say that I am not unworthy of what you promise me. I am a mother, Philippe; but God has appointed, — I think so, at least," she added, blushing, — "that maternity should be, with the creature, a state analogous to that of fructification in the plant. The fruit comes only after the flower. In the flowering the plant is prepared, transformed; for the flowering, according to my idea, is love."

"You are right, Andrée."

"I," continued the young girl, quickly, — "I have known

neither preparation nor transformation; I am an anomaly. I have not loved, I have not desired; my mind and heart are as virginal as my body; and yet, sad prodigy! what I have not desired, what I have not even dreamed of, God sends me, — he who has never given fruit to the tree created to be sterile. Where in me are the aptitudes, the instincts; where are the resources, even? The mother who suffers the pains of confinement knows and understands her lot; I — I know nothing. I tremble at thought; I go to that last day as I would go to the scaffold. Philippe, I am accursed."

"Andrée, sister!"

"Philippe," she resumed vehemently, "do I not well know that I hate that child? Oh, yes! I hate it! I shall remember all my life, if I live, Philippe, the day when for the first time the mortal enemy I bear stirred within me. I shudder yet as I remember how that movement, so sweet to mothers, of the innocent creature kindled in my blood a fever of wrath, and brought blasphemy to my lips, till then so pure. Philippe, I am a bad mother; Philippe I am accursed!"

"In the name of Heaven, dear Andrée, calm yourself. Let not your mind lead your heart astray. That child is your life, your blood; I love it, because it comes from you."

"You love it!" she exclaimed, furious and livid; "you dare to tell me, me, that you love my dishonor and your own! you dare to tell me that you love that memorial of a crime, that representation of the base criminal! Well, Philippe, I am not base, I am not false; I hate the child because it is not my child, and I have not called it. I execrate it because it will, perhaps, resemble its father. Its father! — Oh! I shall die some day in pronouncing that horrible word! My God!" she cried, falling to her knees on the floor, "I cannot kill that child at its birth,

for thou dost give it life. I could not kill myself while I bore it, for thou hast forbidden suicide as well as murder. But I pray thee, I beseech thee, I implore thee, if thou art just, my God, if thou carest for the miseries of this world, if thou hast not decreed that I shall die of despair after having lived in disgrace and tears, — my God, take back that child! My God, kill that child! My God, deliver me! avenge me!" Terrible with rage, and grand in movement, she struck her forehead against the marble chimney-piece in spite of Philippe's efforts, who pressed her in his arms. Suddenly the door opened; the servant returned, conducting the doctor, who at the first glance understood the whole scene.

"Madame," said the doctor, with that professional quiet which always imposes restraint or submission, "do not aggravate the pains of this labor which is now approaching. You," he said to the servant, "prepare everything as I told you on the way. You," speaking to Philippe, "will be more reasonable than Madame, and instead of sharing her fears and her weakness, you will add your encouragements to mine."

Andrée rose almost ashamed. Philippe led her to an armchair. The patient then turned red and threw herself back in a painful convulsion; her clenched hands clung to the fringes of the chair, and the first cry issued from her violet lips.

"That sorrow, that fall, that anger, have hastened the crisis," said the doctor; "withdraw to your chamber, Monsieur de Taverney, and — courage!"

Philippe, with swelling heart, rushed to Andrée, who had heard, who trembled, and who, rising in spite of her pain, threw her arms around her brother's neck. She embraced him closely, kissed his cold cheek, and said in a low voice, "Adieu! adieu! adieu!"

"Doctor! Doctor!" cried Philippe, in despair; "do you hear!"

Louis separated the unhappy couple with gentle force, replaced Andrée in the easy chair, conducted Philippe to his chamber, and bolted the door which separated it from Andrée's room; then closing curtains and doors, he shrouded thus the scene which was about to take place between the physician and the woman, between God and both.

At three o'clock in the morning the doctor opened the door behind which Philippe wept and prayed. "Your sister has given birth to a son," he said.

Philippe clasped his hands.

"Do not come in," said the doctor; "she is asleep."

"She sleeps — Oh, Doctor! is it really true that she

"If it were otherwise, Monsieur, I should say to you: Your sister has given birth to a son, but that son has lost his mother. Look, then."

Philippe put his head through the door.

"Listen to her breathing."

"Yes! oh, yes!" murmured Philippe, embracing the doctor.

"Now, you know that we have engaged a nurse. In passing the Point-du-Jour, where that woman lives, I notified her to be ready. But you alone can bring her; take advantage, then, of the patient's sleep, and set off with the carriage in which I came."

"But you, Doctor, you?"

"I have in the Place Royale a patient very ill with pleurisy. I will finish the night at his bedside."

"The cold, Doctor —"

"I have my cloak."

"The town is not very safe."

"Twenty times in twenty years I have been stopped by

night. I have always replied: 'My friend, I am a physician, on my way to a patient. Do you wish for my cloak? Take it; but do not kill me, for without me my patient may die.' And observe, Monsieur, this cloak has seen twenty years' service. The thieves have always left it to me."

"Good doctor — To-morrow, is it not?"

"To-morrow, at eight o'clock, I shall be here?"

The doctor directed the servant to perform certain services, and bestow careful attention on the patient. He wished the child to be placed by its mother's side. Philippe begged him to remove it, recalling his sister's last words.

Louis therefore placed the child in the servant's chamber, and then departed by way of the Rue Montorgueil, while the carriage took Philippe in the direction of Roule. The servant fell asleep in the easy chair near her mistress.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE ABDUCTION.

In the intervals of the refreshing sleep that follows great fatigue, the mind seems to acquire a double force, — the faculty of appreciating the comfort of the situation, and the faculty of watching over the body in its prostration.

Andrée, returning to a consciousness of life, opened her eyes and saw at her side the sleeping servant. She heard the joyous crackling on the hearth, and wondered at the silence of the chamber where everything was, like herself, in repose. This consciousness was not that of complete wakefulness, nor was it a dream. Andrée took pleasure in prolonging that state of indecision, of soft somnolence; she suffered ideas to spring up one after another in her tired brain, as if she feared the sudden invasion of reason in its completeness. Suddenly a cry, distant, feeble, hardly heard, reached her ear through the thickness of the partition. This noise again produced in Andrée the trembling from which she had suffered so much. It brought back to her that feeling of hatred which for some months had troubled her innocence and her kindness, as a shock disturbs a liquid in a vessel in which dregs are sleeping.

From this moment there was for Andrée no more sleep nor repose; she remembered, — she hated. But the force of sensations is commonly in proportion to corporeal strength. Andrée no longer had the vigor she had mani-

fested in the scene with Philippe the evening before. The cry of the child reached her brain, first as a pain, and then as an annoyance. At length she asked herself if Philippe, in removing that child, with his usual consideration, had not been the executor of a will somewhat cruel.

The thought of the evil we wish to any creature is not so repulsive as the sight of it. Andrée, who execrated that child when an invisible idea, who had even desired its death, was hurt at hearing the unfortunate being cry "He is suffering," she thought. And then she replied to herself, "Why should I be concerned for his sufferings,— I, the most miserable of living creatures?"

The child uttered another cry, louder and more painful. Andrée then perceived that this voice awoke in her, as it were, a troubled voice, and felt her heart drawn as by an invisible chain toward the abandoned, crying child. That of which the young girl had felt the want was now realized in her. Nature had accomplished one of its preparations. Physical pain, that strong tie, had bound the mother's heart to the slightest movement of her child.

"It must not be," thought Andrée, "that this poor orphan cries to Heaven for vengeance against me. God has given to these little creatures, hardly born, the most eloquent of voices. One may kill them,— that is, put them out of suffering; but one has no right to inflict pain upon them. If we had that right, God would not have permitted them to cry so."

Andrée raised her head, and tried to call her servant; but her feeble voice could not arouse the robust peasant. The child had ceased crying.

"Doubtless," thought Andrée, "the nurse has arrived; I heard the noise of the outer door. Yes, some one is moving in the next room; and the little creature no longer cries. The care of a stranger is already extended over it,

and reassures its unformed intelligence. Oh, she, then, is the mother who takes care of the child! For a few crowns the child born of my body will find a mother. And later, passing near me who have suffered so much, near me whose life has produced its own, that child will not look at me; it will say 'mother' to a mercenary more generous in her hired love than I in my just resentment. That shall not be. I have suffered; I have purchased the right to look on the face of that child; I have the right to compel it to love me for my care, to respect me for my sacrifice and my sorrow." She made a more determined effort, summoned all her forces, and called, "Marguerite! Marguerite!"

The servant awoke lazily, and without moving from her easy chair, to which she was bound by a heaviness almost lethargic.

"Do you hear me?" said Andrée.

"Yes, Madame, yes," said Marguerite, coming to her senses. And she approached the bed. "Madame wishes to drink?"

"No."

"Madame perhaps wishes to know what time it is?"

"No, no," replied Andrée, looking steadily at the door of the next chamber.

"Ah, I understand; Madame wishes to know if Monsieur her brother has returned."

Andrée struggled against her desire with all the weakness of a proud soul, with all the energy of a warm and generous heart.

"I wish," she stammered at length, — "I wish — Open that door, Marguerite."

"Yes, Madame — Ah, how cold it is there! The wind, Madame, — what a wind!"

The wind in fact came into Andrée's chamber, and shook the flame of the candles and of the night-lamp.

"It is the nurse, who has left open a door or a window. See, Marguerite, see! That child must be cold."

Marguerite turned toward the adjoining chamber. "I will go and cover him up, Madame," she said.

"No, no!" murmured Andrée, with a feeble and broken voice; "bring it to me."

Marguerite stopped in the middle of the chamber. "Madame," she said softly, "Monsieur Philippe expressly directed the child to be left there, — fearing, no doubt, that Madame might be disturbed or excited."

"Bring me my child!" cried the young mother, with a burst that might have broken her heart; for from her eyes, which had continued dry in the midst of her sufferings, issued tears on which must have smiled, in heaven, the protecting angels of little children.

Marguerite hastened into the chamber. Andrée, sitting up, hid her face in her hands. The servant returned immediately, with a look of stupefaction.

"Well?" said Andrée.

"Well — Madame — some one, then, has come?"

"What, — some one? Who?"

"Madame, the child is no longer there."

"Indeed, I heard a noise a little while ago," said Andrée, — "steps; the nurse must have come while you were asleep, — she did not wish to wake you. But where is my brother? Look in his chamber."

Marguerite ran to Philippe's room. No one there!

"It is strange," said Andrée, anxiously; "can he have gone out again without seeing me?"

"Ah, Madame!" cried the servant.

"What is it?"

"The street-door was just opened."

"Look! look!"

"It is Monsieur Philippe returning. Enter, Monsieur, enter."

Philippe, in fact, entered. Behind him a peasant woman, enveloped in a thick cloak of striped wool, bestowed upon the house that benevolent smile with which the hireling welcomes every new connection.

"Sister, sister, I am here," said Philippe, coming into the chamber.

"Dear brother! what troubles, what sorrows I cause you! Ah, here is the nurse; I was so afraid she had gone —"

"Gone? she has just come."

"Has returned, you mean. No; I heard her plainly a little while ago, softly as she walked."

"I don't understand you, sister; no one —"

"Oh, I thank you, Philippe," said Andrée, drawing him to her, and accenting each word, — "I thank you for having understood me so well that you would not take away that child till I had seen it — kissed it. Philippe, you have well read my heart. Yes, yes; be tranquil, I shall love my child."

Philippe seized Andrée's hand, and covered it with kisses.

"Tell the nurse to restore it to me," added the young mother.

"But, Monsieur," said the servant, "you know well that the child is no longer there."

"What! what are you saying?" replied Philippe.

Andrée looked at her brother with terror in her eyes. The young man ran to the servant's bed; he searched, and finding nothing, uttered a terrible cry. Andrée followed his movements in the mirror. She saw him return, pale, with arms inert; she understood a part of the truth,

and replying like an echo to her brother's cry, she sighed, and fell back unconscious upon the pillow.

Philippe was not prepared either for this new misfortune or for Andrée's great grief. He collected all his forces, and by dint of caresses, consolations, and tears, he recalled her to life.

"My child!" Andrée murmured, — "my child!"

"Let us save the mother!" said Philippe to himself. "Sister, my dear sister, we are all crazy, it seems to me; we forget that the good doctor has taken the child away with him."

"The doctor?" cried Andrée, with the pain of doubt, with the joy of hope.

"Why, yes! why, yes! Ah, why, we lose our senses here!"

"Philippe, you swear to me —"

"Dear sister, you are no more reasonable than I. How do you imagine that that child could have disappeared?" and he forced a laugh which deceived both nurse and servant.

Andrée came to herself. "Yet I heard —" she said.

"What?"

"Steps."

Philippe shuddered. "Impossible!" he said; "you were asleep."

"No, no; I was wide awake! I heard — I heard —"

"Very well, you heard that good doctor, who, returning after my departure, because he feared for the health of that child, took him away. Besides, he had spoken to me about it."

"You reassure me."

"How could it be that I should not reassure you; it is so simple?"

"But then," objected the nurse, "what am I doing here?"

"Sure enough! The doctor is waiting for you at your house."

"Oh!"

"Go to him, then. That Marguerite slept so soundly that she heard nothing of what the doctor said, or else he did not speak to her."

Andrée fell back, more tranquil after that terrible shock. Philippe dismissed the nurse, and gave some directions to the servant. Then taking a lamp he examined carefully the door of the adjoining chamber, found a door of the garden open, saw footprints in the snow, and followed them to the garden-door, where they were lost. "Steps of a man!" he cried. "The child is stolen. Misfortune! misfortune!"

CHAPTER LIX.

THE VILLAGE OF HARAMONT.

THOSE footsteps in the snow were Gilbert's, who, since his last interview with Balsamo, had followed up his task of surveillance, and had made ready his vengeance. He had spared no pains. By dint of pleasant words and small services he had succeeded in making himself acceptable, even pleasing, to Rousseau's wife. His method was simple. Of the thirty sous a day which Rousseau allowed his copyist, the prudent Gilbert set aside one franc, three times every week, with which he purchased some little present for Thérèse, — a ribbon for her bonnet, a delicacy for the table, or a bottle of cordial. The good lady, sensitive to everything that flattered her taste or her small pride, was now and then gratified by exclamations of Gilbert at table in praise of her culinary skill.

For the Genevan philosopher had succeeded in getting his young protégé admitted to the table; and during the last two months Gilbert, thus favored, had accumulated two louis in his treasury, which slept under his pallet, side by side with Balsamo's twenty thousand francs.

But what a life! What persistency of resolution and of will! Rising at daybreak Gilbert began by examining with his keen eyes the situation of Andrée, that he might discover the least change introduced into the dull and regular life of the recluse. Nothing, then, escaped his observation, — neither the sand of the garden-walks,

where his piercing sight measured Andrée's footprints; nor the folds of the curtains, more or less closely drawn, the opening in which was for him a sure index of Andrée's humor, for on her days of gloom she refused even to see the light of day. Thus Gilbert knew what was going on in her soul, and in the house. He had also learned to interpret all Philippe's movements; and making his inferences with skill, he divined Philippe's purpose when he went out, and what result he brought on his return. He pushed detail so far as to follow Philippe one evening when he went to Versailles to find Doctor Louis. This visit to Versailles had slightly puzzled him; but when, two days later, he saw the doctor stealing furtively into the garden he understood the mystery.

Gilbert knew the dates, and was aware that the time for the realization of all his hopes was at hand. He had taken all the precautions necessary to assure success in an enterprise bristling with difficulties. This was his plan as laid out: the two louis enabled him to hire in the Faubourg Saint Denis a cabriolet with two horses. That carriage was to be at his orders whenever he should need it. He had also explored the suburbs of Paris in a vacation of three or four days which he had taken. During that vacation he had visited a little town of Soissonnais, lying eighteen leagues from Paris, and surrounded by a vast forest. This little town was called Villers-Cotterets. On arriving he had immediately called upon the only notary in the place, Maître Niquet. To him Gilbert presented himself as the son of a great nobleman's intendant. This great nobleman, wishing to do a kindness to the child of one of his peasants, had charged Gilbert to find a nurse for it. In all probability the munificence of the great nobleman would not be limited to the nurse's monthly pay; and besides, he would place in the hands of Maître Niquet a certain sum for the use of the child.

Then Maître Niquet, the father of three fine boys, had mentioned to him the daughter of the nurse of his three sons, who lived in the little village of Haramont, a league from Villers-Cotterets, and who, after being legitimately married in his office, continued the occupation of madame her mother. This honest woman was named Madeleine Pitou, and was the happy mother of a son, four years old, who showed every indication of robust health; besides, she had recently been confined, and consequently would be at Gilbert's service whenever he should bring or send his nursling.

These arrangements having been made, Gilbert, always punctual, had returned to Paris two hours before the expiration of his leave of absence.

Why had Gilbert chosen the little town of Villers-Cotterets, in preference to all others? In this, as in many other matters, he had been guided by the influence of Rousseau, who had once spoken of the forest of Villers-Cotterets as one of the most fertile in existence, and had named three or four villages hidden in that forest like nests in deep foliage. It would be impossible, then, for any one to discover Gilbert's child in one of those villages.

Haramont especially had interested Rousseau, — so much indeed, that he, the misanthrope, the hermit, said again and again: "Haramont is the end of the world; Haramont is the desert; one can live and die there like the birds, — on the branch while he lives, under the leaves when he dies." Gilbert had also heard the philosopher describe the interior of a cottage, lighting up details with the fire of his genius, — from the smile of the nurse to the bleating of the goat; from the appetizing odor of the thick vegetable soup to the perfumes of the wild mulberry and the violet-colored heather.

"I will go there," Gilbert had said; "my child shall

grow up beneath the shades where the master has breathed his wishes and his sighs."

To Gilbert a caprice was an inexorable command, especially when that caprice presented itself in the guise of a moral necessity. His joy, then, was great when Maître Niquet, anticipating his wishes, mentioned Haramont to him as a village that would suit his purposes exactly.

On his return to Paris, Gilbert had given his attention to the cabriolet. It was not handsome, but it was strong, — it was all that he needed. The horses were of heavy build; the postilion was a dull fellow from the stables. But what Gilbert had in mind was to fulfil his intentions, and without awakening any curiosity. His story had not been questioned by Maître Niquet; with his new garments he was of sufficiently good appearance to resemble the son of the intendant of a good family, or the valet, in disguise, of a duke and peer. Nor had his proposition been received with any suspicion by the owner of the cabriolet. It was a period when there was still confidence between the people and gentlemen. Money paid was received in those times with a degree of gratitude and without the asking of questions. Besides, two louis were then worth as much as four are worth to-day; and to-day four louis are good to earn. The proprietor agreed therefore that on two hours' notice his carriage should be at Gilbert's service.

This enterprise had for the young man all the attractiveness which the imagination of poets and that of philosophers, — two fairies very differently clad, — lend to good actions and to good resolutions. To remove the child from its cruel mother, — that is, to plant shame and sorrow in the enemy's camp, — and then with a change of front, to enter the cottage of virtuous villagers, as painted by Rousseau, and deposit on a child's cradle a large sum of

money, to be regarded as a tutelary god by those poo villagers, to pass for a grand personage, — this was more than enough to satisfy pride, resentment, love for neighbors, hatred for enemies.

The fatal day at length arrived. It followed ten other days which Gilbert had spent in anxiety, ten nights in which he had hardly slept. Notwithstanding the severity of the weather he lay with his window open, and every movement of Andrée or of Philippe was repeated in his ear, as the bell answers to the hand that pulls the cord. On this last day he saw Philippe and Andrée talking together near the fireplace; he saw the servant set out hastily for Versailles, forgetting to close the blinds. He ran immediately to notify the owner of the carriage, and waited in front of the stable while they harnessed the horses, biting his hands in the effort to control his impatience. At length the postilion mounted his horse, and Gilbert the cabriolet, which he stopped at the corner of a little deserted street near the market. He then returned to Rousseau's, and wrote a letter of farewell to the good philosopher, and of thanks to Thérèse, announcing that a small inheritance called him to the South, and that he should return, — all without precise information. Then with his money in his pocket and a long knife in his sleeve he was about to slide down the gutter-pipe into the garden, when a sudden idea arrested him. The snow! He had been so occupied that he had not thought of that. On the snow his footprints would be visible. Those footprints, leading from the wall of Rousseau's house would cause Philippe and Andrée to make an investigation, and his disappearance at the very time of the abduction would reveal the whole secret.

It was therefore necessary to go round by way of the Rue Coq-Héron, and enter by the garden-door, a key to which Gilbert had obtained a month previously, and from

which ran a well-beaten path in which his feet would leave no tracks. He lost no time, and arrived while the carriage that had brought Doctor Louis was waiting before the principal entrance of the little hôtel. He opened the door cautiously, saw no one, and went and hid himself in the corner of the pavilion, near the summer-house.

It was a terrible night. He could hear all, — the groans and cries wrested by suffering, even the first wail of the child that was born to him. Meanwhile, leaning against the naked wall, he received, without knowing it, the snow which fell thick and heavy from the darkened sky. His breast beat against the handle of the knife which he pressed despairingly to his breast. His fixed eyes had the color of blood, the glow of fire.

At length the doctor went out; at length Philippe exchanged with the doctor a few last words. Then Gilbert approached the blind, leaving a track on the carpet of snow which, ankle-deep, crackled under his step. He saw Andrée sleeping on her bed, Marguerite dozing in the easy chair, and looking for the child near its mother, he did not see it. He understood immediately and turned toward the entrance. He opened the door, not without making a noise that alarmed him, and finding his way to the bed which had been Nicole's, feeling around he put his icy fingers on the poor child's face, who thereupon uttered the cries which Andrée had heard. Then enveloping the new-born infant in a woollen wrap, he carried it away, leaving the door half-open, to avoid the risk of noise. A minute later he had gained the street by way of the garden; he hastened to his carriage, aroused the postilion whom he found asleep, and closing the leather curtain while the man mounted his horse, he said, —

"A half-louis for you, if in a quarter of an hour we have passed the barrier."

The horses, sharp-shod for ice, started off at a gallop.

CHAPTER LX.

THE PITOU FAMILY.

During the journey everything frightened Gilbert. The noise of the carriages that followed or passed by his own, the moaning of the wind in the dismantled trees, seemed to him sounds of an organized pursuit, or the cries of those from whom the child had been taken. Nothing threatened him, however. The postilion bravely did his duty, and the steaming horses arrived at Dammartin at the time Gilbert had expected, — that is, before the first light of day. Gilbert paid his half-louis, changed horses and postilion, and resumed his journey.

During the first part of the way, the child, carefully sheltered by the covering and shielded by Gilbert himself, had not felt the cold, and had not uttered a single cry. As soon as it was light Gilbert, seeing the country in the distance, felt more courageous, and to drown the cries which the child was beginning to make, he started on one of those everlasting songs which he used to sing at Taverney when he was returning from the chase. The creaking of the axle-tree and the traces, the noise of the iron-work about the carriage, the little bells of the horses, made a diabolical accompaniment, the volume of which the postilion himself increased by mingling with Gilbert's refrain fragments of a *Bourbonnaise* of a character somewhat seditious.

This last driver did not even suspect that Gilbert had a child in the cabriolet. He stopped his horses just before reaching Villers-Cotterets, received the stipulated fare for

his journey, a crown and six francs, and Gilbert, taking up his burden carefully enveloped in the folds of the blanket, singing his song as seriously as possible, quickly moved away, crossed a ditch, and disappeared in a path strewed with leaves, which led to the village of Haramont.

The weather had become very cold. The snow had ceased falling; the ground was hard and bristling with underbrush and thorny bushes. Above could be seen the outlines of the trees of the forests, leafless and gloomy, through whose branches shone the pale blue of a sky still hazy. The keen air, the fragrance of the oaks, the pearls of ice suspended on the ends of the branches, all this freedom, all this poetry excited the young man's imagination. He walked with a rapid and proud step through the little ravine, without stumbling, without looking around; for in the midst of the groups of trees, he took for his guide the steeple of the hamlet and the blue smoke of the chimneys which could be seen through the gray lattice-work of the branches. Within half an hour he crossed a stream bordered with ivy and yellow cress, and asked, at the first cottage, the children of a laborer to direct him to the house of Madeleine Pitou.

Silent and attentive, instead of stupid and inactive like some peasants, the children rose, and staring at the stranger, led him, holding each other by the hand, to a cottage of fair size, of very good appearance, and situated by the banks of a stream which flowed by most of the houses in the village. The limpid waters of this stream were swollen somewhat by the first melting of the snow. A wooden bridge — that is, a large plank — joined the road to the steps of earth that led to the house.

One of the children, his guides, showed Gilbert where Madeleine Pitou lived.

"There?" repeated Gilbert.

The child nodded his head without saying a word.

"Madeleine Pitou?" Gilbert asked the child once more.

The latter having reiterated his silent affirmation, Gilbert crossed the little bridge, and knocked at the door of the cottage; while the children, who had again taken each other's hands, looked with all their might to see what had brought to Madeleine's house this fine gentleman in a brown suit and buckled shoes.

Gilbert, however, had not yet noticed in the village any living creature but these children. Haramont was really the desert so much desired.

As soon as the door was opened, a spectacle full of charm for everybody, but particularly so for a young philosopher, met Gilbert's view. A stout peasant woman was nursing a fine child, a few months old, while kneeling before her, another child, a vigorous boy four or five years of age, was saying his prayer in a loud voice. In a corner by the fireplace, near a window, or rather a hole cut in the wall and closed with glass, another peasant woman, about thirty-five years old, was spinning flax, — her wheel on her right, a wooden stool under her feet, a large poodle on the stool.

The dog, seeing Gilbert, barked in a very hospitable and civil manner, just enough to show his vigilance. The child at prayers turned round, cutting short the utterance of the *Pater*, and the two women uttered a sort of exclamation of surprise mingled with joy.

Gilbert began by smiling at the nurse. "Good dame Madeleine," he said, "I salute you."

The woman started up, "Monsieur knows my name!" she said.

"As you see; but don't let me disturb you, I beg. In fact, instead of one nursling which you have now, you are about to have two;" and he deposited in the homely

cradle of the country child the little city child he had brought.

"Oh, how pretty he is!" exclaimed the woman who was spinning.

"Yes, Sister Angélique, very pretty," said Madeleine.

"Madame is your sister?" said Gilbert, pointing to the spinner.

"My sister, yes, Monsieur," replied Madeleine; "my husband's sister."

"Yes, my aunt Gélique," murmured the little fellow, in a low voice, who joined in the conversation without rising.

"Be still, Ange; be still!" said the mother; "you interrupt Monsieur."

"What I have to propose to you is very simple, good dame. This child is the son of one of my master's tenants, a ruined farmer. My master, godfather to this child, wishes him to be brought up in the country, and become a good workman, with good health and good manners; will you take charge of this child?"

"But, Monsieur —"

"He was born yesterday, and has not yet been nursed," interrupted Gilbert. "Besides, it is the child of which Maître Niquet, notary of Villers-Cotterets, must have spoken to you."

Madeleine immediately seized the child, and gave it the breast with a generous impetuosity which moved Gilbert deeply.

"They did not deceive me," he said; "you are a good woman. I confide to your care this child in the name of my master. I see that he will be happy here, and I hope that he will bring into this cottage a dream of happiness in exchange for that which he will find here. How much a month did you have for the children of Maître Niquet, of Villers-Cotterets?"

"Twelve francs, Monsieur; but Monsieur Niquet is rich, and he added now and then a few francs for sugar and extras."

"Mother Madeleine," said Gilbert, with pride, "for this child you shall be paid twenty francs a month, which makes two hundred and forty francs a year."

"Jesus!" cried Madeleine; "thanks, Monsieur."

"This is for the first year," said Gilbert, laying on the table ten handsome louis, which made the two women stare, and toward which the little Ange stretched his rapacious hand.

"But, Monsieur, if the child should not live?" the nurse objected timidly.

"That would be a great misfortune, — which will not happen," said Gilbert. "You are satisfied with the monthly pay for nursing, then?"

"Oh, yes, Monsieur!"

"Let us pass to the payments of an allowance for the other years."

"Will the child remain with us?"

"Probably."

"In that case, Monsieur, we should be his father and mother."

Gilbert turned pale. "Yes," he said, in a suppressed tone.

"Then, Monsieur, this poor little one is abandoned?"

Gilbert was not expecting such emotion, such questions. He composed himself, however. "I have not told you all," he added; "the poor father has died from grief."

The two good women clasped their hands expressively.

"And the mother?" asked Angélique.

"Oh, the mother, the mother!" replied Gilbert, breathing painfully, "no child, born or unborn, can ever count on her."

It was at this point in their conversation that Father Pitou returned from the fields, appearing calm and happy. His was one of those dull and honest natures, full of gentleness and health, which Greuze has represented in his excellent paintings. A few words explained to him the situation. Besides, he comprehended things through pride, especially those things which he did not understand.

Gilbert explained that the allowance of the child was to be paid until he became a man and capable of supporting himself by the use of his mind and his arms.

"Be it so," said Pitou; "I think we shall love this child, he is so pretty."

"He too," said Angélique and Madeleine, — "he thinks as we do."

"Come, then, with me, I beg, to see Maître Niquet; I will deposit with him the necessary money, that you may be satisfied, and the child may be happy."

"Immediately, Monsieur," replied Pitou, rising from his seat.

Then Gilbert took leave of the good women, and approached the cradle in which the new-comer had already displaced the child of the house. He bent over the cradle with a gloomy look, and for the first time noticing the face of his son, he saw that it resembled Andrée. This sight broke his heart; he had to bury his finger-nails in his flesh to restrain a tear which rose from his wounded heart to his eyelid. He placed a timid kiss on the fresh cheek of the newly born, and drew back tottering.

Father Pitou was already on the threshold, a stout stick in his hand, his best coat on his back.

Gilbert gave a half-louis to the chubby Ange Pitou, who crawled between his legs, and the two women requested the honor of embracing him, with the touching familiarity of country people.

This father of eighteen years had been so weighed down with emotions that he was nearly crushed by them. Pale, nervous, he began to grow bewildered.

"Let us go," he said to Pitou.

"As you please, Monsieur," replied the peasant, walking on; and they took their departure.

Suddenly Madeleine cried out from the door. "Monsieur! Monsieur!"

"What is it?" said Gilbert.

"His name! his name! What do you wish him to be called?"

"His name is Gilbert!" replied the young man, with a manly pride.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE DEPARTURE.

At the notary's, the business was soon disposed of. Gilbert deposited, under his own name, a sum of twenty thousand francs, lacking a few hundred, designed to defray the expenses of education and maintenance of the child, and also to establish him in some business when he reached manhood. He allowed for the education and maintenance the sum of five hundred francs a year for fifteen years, and decided that the rest of the money should be set aside for the purchase of some business or a piece of land.

Having thus provided for the child, Gilbert thought of the guardians. He wished that two thousand four hundred francs should be given to Pitou by the boy when he attained the age of eighteen years. Until then Maître Niquet was to pay out annually only five hundred francs. Maître Niquet was to enjoy the use of the money as compensation for his trouble.

Gilbert took a proper receipt for the money from Niquet, and for the child from Pitou, — Pitou witnessing the signature of Niquet, Niquet that of Pitou; so that at about noon Gilbert was ready to take his departure, leaving Niquet in a state of admiration for this precocious wisdom, and Pitou rejoicing in his good fortune.

On leaving the village of Haramont, Gilbert fancied himself separating from the whole world. Nothing had for him now either meaning or promise. He had left

behind the careless life of a young man, and had committed what men call a crime, which perhaps God would severely punish. At the same time, confident in his own strength of mind and body, Gilbert had the courage to tear himself away from Maître Niquet, who had accompanied him, and had taken a great liking to him, and who tempted him by a thousand allurements.

But the mind is capricious; human nature is subject to weaknesses. In proportion as a man has will, spontaneity of action, energy in the execution of his plans, he measures the distance which already separates him from his first step. It is then that the most courageous are alarmed; it is then that they say, like Cæsar, "Have I done well in passing the Rubicon?"

Gilbert, finding himself on the verge of the forest, turned to look once more upon the brown tops of the trees which hid all Haramont except the steeple. This charming picture of happiness and peace plunged him into a revery full of regret and delight.

"Fool that I am!" he said to himself; "where am I going? Will not God turn away in anger in the depths of heaven? What! an idea presented itself to me; what! circumstances favored the accomplishment of that idea; what! a man created by God to cause the wrong which I have done, has consented to repair this wrong, and I find myself to-day possessor of riches and my child! So, with ten thousand francs, ten thousand being reserved for the child, I can live here like a happy husbandman, among these good villagers, in the bosom of this sublime and fruitful Nature. I can bury myself forever in peaceful blessedness, in work and contemplation; I can forget the world, and be forgotten by it; I can — unbounded happiness! — bring up this child myself, and thus enjoy my labor. Why not? Are not these good chances compen-

sation for all my past suffering? Oh, yes; I can live thus! yes, I can share in the division of this money with the child, which, besides, I shall have brought up myself, earning thus the money which would be given to these hirelings. I can confess to Maître Niquet that I am his father; I can do everything." And his heart was filled by degrees with inexpressible joy, and with a hope which he had not yet tasted, even in the most pleasant hallucinations of his dreams.

Suddenly the worm which slumbered at the core of this beautiful fruit awoke, and showed its hideous head; it was remorse, it was shame, it was misery. "I cannot," said Gilbert, turning pale; "I have robbed this woman of her child, as I robbed her of her honor. I have robbed this man of money, to make, I said, reparation. I have, then, no longer the right to use it for my own happiness; I have no longer the right to keep the child, since the mother cannot have it; it belongs to both of us or to neither."

And with these words, painful as wounds, Gilbert rose in despair; his face now expressed the most gloomy, the most hateful of passions. "Well, then," said he, "I will be miserable; I will suffer; I will give up love and fortune; but the portion of good which I should have done, I will turn to evil. My patrimony henceforth is vengeance and misery. Do not fear, Andrée, I will share faithfully with you!" He turned to the right, and after a moment's reflection as to the direction he should take, plunged into the woods, where he walked all day in the direction of Normandy, which he had reckoned on reaching after a four days' journey.

He possessed nine francs and a few sous. His appearance was irreproachable, his face calm and quiet. Carrying a book under his arm, he looked very much like a

student of good family returning to the paternal mansion. He was accustomed to walk at night in the fine roads, and to sleep by day in the fields in the sun's rays. Twice only the wind disturbed him so much that he was obliged to enter a cottage, where, upon a chair by the fireplace, he slept to his heart's content without noticing the approach of night. He always had a pretext and a destination. "I am going to Rouen," he said, "to my uncle's, and I come from Villers-Cotterets; I wished, like other young men, to make a journey on foot by way of amusement."

There was no suspicion on the part of the peasants; at that time a book carried respect with it. If Gilbert saw an expression of doubt upon some more compressed lips, he spoke of a school to which his vocation called him. This quickly dispelled every suspicion. Eight days passed thus, during which Gilbert lived like a peasant, spending ten sous a day and walking ten leagues. He arrived at last at Rouen, and once there, had no need of information, nor of asking his way.

The book which he carried was a copy of "La Nouvelle Héloise," richly bound. Rousseau had given it to him, and had written his name on the first leaf of the book. Gilbert, reduced to four francs ten sous, tore out this leaf, which he carefully preserved, and sold the book to a bookseller for three francs.

Thus the young man was enabled to arrive, three days later, in sight of Havre, and at sunset he beheld the sea His shoes were in a condition not at all becoming to a young gentleman who daintily put on silk stockings for travelling through the towns. But Gilbert had another idea; he sold his silk stockings, or rather exchanged them, for a pair of shoes of irreproachable stoutness. As to their elegance, we will say nothing.

This last night he passed in Harfleur, lodged and fed for

sixteen sous. There he ate oysters for the first time in his life. "A dish of the rich," he said to himself, "for the poorest of men; so true is it that God has done nothing but good, while men have done the evil, according to the maxim of Rousseau."

At ten o'clock in the morning on the thirteenth of December, Gilbert entered Havre, and the first thing he saw was the "Adonis," a fine brig of three hundred tons, lying in a dock. The wharves were deserted. Gilbert ventured to go on board the brig over a gang-plank. A cabin-boy approached to question him.

"The captain?" said Gilbert.

The boy pointed to the companion-way, and directly a voice from below cried out, "Let him come down."

Gilbert descended. He was led into a small room, constructed of mahogony and furnished with the most quiet simplicity. A man, thirty years old, pale, nervous, with keen and restless eye, was reading a paper upon a table made of mahogany like the walls. "What does Monsieur wish?" he said to Gilbert.

Gilbert made a sign to the man to dismiss his boy, and the boy withdrew.

"You are the captain of the 'Adonis,' Monsieur?" said Gilbert, immediately.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"This note is addressed to you, then?" He handed to the captain Balsamo's note.

Scarcely had he looked at the writing, when the captain rose and said hastily to Gilbert, with a smile full of affability, "Ah, you too? So young? Good! good!"

Gilbert merely bowed.

"You are going?" he said.

"To America."

"You start?"

"I go with you."

"Good. In eight days, then."

"What shall I do in the mean time, Captain?"

"Have you a passport?"

"No."

"Then you must come on board to-night, after having walked all day outside the town, — at Sainte-Adresse, for instance. Do not speak to any one."

"I must eat; I have no money."

"You must dine here; you shall have supper to-night."

"And afterward?"

"Once embarked, you will not again land; you will remain in hiding here. You will depart without looking again at the sky. Once at sea, twenty leagues out, you shall be free as you please."

"Good."

"Finish to-day all that you have to do."

"I have a letter to write."

"Write it on this table; here is pen, ink, and paper. The post-office is in the faubourg; the boy will conduct you."

"Thanks, Captain," and Gilbert, left alone, wrote a short letter upon which he placed this address: "Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney; Paris, Rue Coq-Héron, 9, — the first door beyond the Rue Plastrière." Then he put the letter in his pocket, ate what the captain himself served him, and followed the boy, who conducted him to the post-office, where the letter was mailed.

All day long Gilbert watched the sea from the top of the cliffs. At night he returned. The captain was on the lookout for him, and brought him on board.

CHAPTER LXII.

GILBERT'S LAST FAREWELL.

PHILIPPE had passed a terrible night. Those footprints in the snow were sufficient proof that some one had made his way into the house to carry off the child; but whom could he accuse? There was nothing to fix his suspicions upon any one.

Philippe knew his father so well that he did not doubt his complicity in the affair. Monsieur de Taverney believed Louis XV. to be the father of this child; he would attach great importance to the preservation of this living witness of the king's infidelity to Madame Dubarry. The baron would also believe that, sooner or later, Andrée would be restored to favor, and would wish to regain at any price the principal means of her coming fortune. These reflections, based upon a revelation, still quite fresh, of the paternal character, comforted Philippe somewhat, who thought it possible to recover this child since he knew who had stolen it. He watched therefore for the coming of Doctor Louis at eight o'clock, to whom, as they walked back and forth in the street, he related the frightful event of the night.

The doctor was a man of good judgment; he examined the footprints in the garden, and after consideration decided in favor of Philippe's suppositions. "I know the baron well enough," he said, "to believe him capable of this wicked deed. At the same time, may not some other interest, more immediate, have led to the abduction of this child?"

"What interest, Doctor?"

"That of the real father."

"Oh!" cried Philippe, "for a moment I had this idea; but the miserable man has not even bread for himself. He is a madman, a fanatic, a fugitive by this time, who must be afraid of my very shadow. Let us make no mistake, Doctor. The miserable fellow committed this crime under the temptation of opportunity; but now that I am no longer angry, although I hate this criminal, I think that I shall avoid meeting him, so that I may not kill him. I think he must have feelings of remorse which punish him; I think that hunger and exile will avenge me as efficiently as my sword."

"Let us say no more about it," said the doctor.

"You will, dear and good friend, consent to just one last falsehood; for we must, first of all, reassure Andrée. You will tell her that yesterday you were alarmed about the health of this child; that you returned in the night, and took him to carry him to his nurse. This fiction which I have improvised for Andrée is the first one that presents itself to my mind."

"I will say that; you will, however, seek for this child?"

"I have a plan for finding him. I have decided to leave France. Andrée will enter the monastery of Saint Denis; then I will seek Monsieur de Taverney. I will tell him that I know all; I will make him disclose to me the hiding-place of the child. His resistance I will overcome by threats of public exposure, by threats of intervention on the part of Madame la Dauphine."

"And what will you do with the child, your sister being in the convent?"

"I will place him at nurse with a woman whom you will recommend to me; afterward I will send him to college,

and when he is grown up I will keep him with me, if I live."

"And do you think that the mother will consent to leave either you or her child?"

"Andrée will henceforth consent to anything I wish. She knows that I have approached Madame la Dauphine on the subject, whose promise I have; she will not allow me to be wanting in respect toward our protectress."

"Let us go in to see the poor mother," said the doctor; and he entered the apartment of Andrée, who was sleeping quietly, comforted by Philippe's attentions. Her first word was a question to the doctor, who had already reassured her by his happy expression. She, from that time, became so calm that her convalescence was much accelerated; and ten days later she rose, and could walk in the conservatory when the sun was shining upon the glass.

On the very day of this walk, Philippe, who had been away for some days, returned to the house in the Rue Coq-Héron with a face so gloomy that the doctor, on opening the door for him, divined some great misfortune.

"What is the matter, then? Does your father refuse to restore the child?"

"My father," said Philippe, "has been seized with an attack of fever, which confined him to his bed three days after his departure from Paris, and he was very low when I arrived. I looked upon all this sickness as a trick, as a pretence, as a proof even of his complicity in the abduction. I insisted, I threatened; but Monsieur de Taverney swore to me by the Christ that he understood nothing I said to him."

"So you return to Paris without having obtained any intelligence?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"And convinced of the baron's veracity?"

"Almost convinced."

"More artful than you, he has not disclosed his secret."

"I threatened him with the intervention of Madame la Dauphine, and the baron turned pale. 'Ruin me if you like,' he said; 'bring dishonor upon your father and yourself; it will be an egregious folly without any result. I do not know what you mean.'"

"So that —"

"So that I return in despair."

At this moment Philippe heard his sister's voice saying, "Has not Philippe returned?"

"Great God! here she is! What shall I say to her?" murmured Philippe.

"Silence!" said the doctor.

Andrée entered the room, and embraced her brother with a joyous tenderness which chilled the young man's heart.

"Well," she said, "where do you come from?"

"I come from my father, in the first place, as I told you."

"Monsieur le Baron is well?"

"Yes, Andrée; but that was not the only visit I have made. I have seen several persons respecting your entrance at Saint Denis. Thank God, everything is now ready; you are saved, you can think of your future with intelligence and firmness."

Andrée approached her brother and with a tender smile, "Dear friend," she said, "my future no longer concerns me; neither must my future trouble any one. The future of my child is all to me, and I shall consecrate myself solely to the son God has given me. This is my resolution, irrevocably taken, since, with the return of my strength, I can no longer doubt the steadiness of my

mind. To live for my son, to suffer privation, to labor even, if necessary, but never to leave him, day or night, — such is the future I have laid out for myself. No more convent, no more egotism; I belong to some one; God no longer wants me!"

The doctor looked at Philippe as if to say: "Well, what did I predict?"

"My sister," cried the young man, "what are you saying?"

"Do not blame me, Philippe, this is no caprice of a weak and vain woman; I will not incommode you. I will impose nothing upon you."

"But — but, Andrée, I cannot remain in France; I wish to leave everything. I have no longer any fortune; no longer any future. I might consent to abandon you at the foot of an altar, but in the world, in the midst of toil, — Andrée, take care!"

"I have considered everything. I love you sincerely, Philippe; but if you leave me, I will restrain my tears, and take refuge near the cradle of my son."

The doctor approached. "This is extravagance, madness," he said.

"Ah, Doctor, what would you have? It is a state of madness to be a mother, but God sent me this madness. So long as this child needs me I shall persist in my resolution."

Philippe and the doctor exchanged glances.

"My child," said the doctor, "I am not a very eloquent preacher; but I think I remember that God forbids too strong an attachment to any creature."

"Yes, sister," added Philippe.

"God does not forbid a mother's strong love for her son, I think, Doctor."

"Pardon me, my child. For every law that comes from God, search out, not the moral cause alone, but also the

material cause. God forbids a mother to love her child to excess, because the child is a frail, delicate plant, exposed to all misfortunes, to all sufferings; and because to love intensely an ephemeral creature is to expose one's self to despair."

"Doctor," murmured Andrée, "why do you say this to me? And you, Philippe, why are you regarding me with this compassion, this paleness?"

"Dear Andrée," interrupted the young man, "follow my advice. Your health is re-established; enter as soon as possible the convent of Saint Denis."

"I! I have told you that I will not leave my son."

"So long as he shall have need of you," said the doctor, gently.

"My God!" cried Andrée, "what is it? Speak! Something sad, cruel?"

"Be careful," the doctor whispered in Philippe's ear; "she is too weak to bear a decided blow."

"Brother, you do not answer; explain yourself."

"Dear sister, you know that on my return I passed through Point-de-Jour, where your child is at nurse."

"Yes, well?"

"Well, the child was somewhat ill."

"Ill! that dear child! Quick, Marguerite; Marguerite, a carriage! I am going to see my child!"

"Impossible!" cried the doctor; "you are not in a condition to go out, or to bear the motion of a carriage."

"You told me this morning that this was possible; you told me that to-morrow on Philippe's return, I should go to see the poor little one."

"I thought you would be stronger than you are."

"Are you deceiving me?"

The doctor remained silent.

"Marguerite!" repeated Andrée, "obey me; a carriage!"

"But it may kill you," interrupted Philippe.

"Well, let it kill me! I do not care so very much for life."

Marguerite waited, regarding in turn her mistress, her master, and the doctor.

"Come! when I command!" cried Andrée, whose cheeks suddenly reddened.

"Dear sister!"

"I will hear nothing more; and if you refuse me a carriage, I will go on foot."

"Andrée," said Philippe, suddenly, "you will not go; no, there is no need of your going."

"My child is dead!" said the young girl, coldly, letting her hands fall over the sides of the chair in which Philippe and the doctor had seated her.

Philippe answered only by kissing one of her cold and listless hands. By degrees Andrée's neck lost its rigidity; her head drooped on her bosom, and she shed copious tears.

"God has willed," said Philippe, "that we should submit to this new misfortune, — God, who is so great, so just, who may have other plans for you, who judged, no doubt, that the presence of this child at your side would be a punishment undeserved."

"But yet," sighed the poor mother, "why has God made this innocent creature suffer?"

"God has not made him suffer, my child," said the doctor; "he died on the very night of his birth. Have no more regret for him than for a shadow that comes and goes."

"The cries that I heard?"

"Were his farewell to life."

Andrée hid her face in her hands, while the two men, expressing their thought in an eloquent look, congratulated themselves on their pious lie.

Suddenly Marguerite entered with a letter addressed to Andrée in the following manner: "Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney, Paris, Rue Coq-Héron, — the first door beyond the Rue Plastrière."

Philippe showed the letter to the doctor over Andrée's head, who was no longer weeping, but was absorbed in her grief. "Who could have written it?" he thought. "No one knew her address, and it is not our father's writing."

"Here, Andrée," said Philippe, "is a letter for you."

Without thinking, without hesitating, without surprise, Andrée tore open the envelope, and wiping her eyes, unfolded the paper to read; but she had scarcely run over the lines which composed this letter when she uttered a loud cry, rose up like a mad woman, and with a terrible contraction of her arms and feet fell, heavy as a statue, into the arms of Marguerite who was standing near.

Philippe picked up the letter and read,—

AT SEA, December 15, 17—

I go, driven away by you, and you will not see me again; but I carry away my child, which shall never call you mother!

GILBERT.

Philippe crushed the paper, with a roar of anger. "Oh!" he said, grinding his teeth, "I had almost pardoned the crime committed on the spur of temptation; but this deliberate crime shall be punished. Over your lifeless head, Andrée, I swear to kill the miserable fellow the first time I meet him. God will permit me to meet him, for he has filled the measure to the brim. Doctor, will Andrée recover?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Doctor, Andrée must enter the monastery of Saint Denis to-morrow; by the day after to-morrow I must be at the nearest seaport. The villain has fled, I will follow him. Besides, I must have this child. Doctor, which is the nearest seaport?"

"Havre."

"I will be at Havre in thirty-six hours," replied Philippe.

CHAPTER LXIII.

ON BOARD.

From that moment Andrée's house was dull and silent as a tomb.

The knowledge that her son was dead would perhaps have killed Andrée. It would have been one of those heavy, abiding sorrows which perpetually undermine. Gilbert's letter was a blow so violent that it aroused all the aggressive force and feeling that still remained in Andrée's generous soul. Coming to herself, she looked at Philippe, and the wrath which she read in his eyes was a new source of courage for herself. She remained silent until her strength was so far recovered that her voice would not tremble, and then, taking Philippe's hand, "My friend," she said, "you spoke to me this morning of the monastery of Saint Denis, in which a cell has been granted me by Madame la Dauphine?"

"Yes, Andrée."

"You will conduct me thither to-day, if you please."

"Thanks, sister."

"To you, Doctor," Andrée continued, "for so many kindnesses a word of thanks would be a barren recompense. Your recompense, Doctor, cannot be found on earth." She went to him and kissed him. "This little medallion," she said, "contains my portrait, which my mother caused to be made when I was two years old. It should resemble my son. Keep it, Doctor, and let it speak to you sometimes of the child whom you have ushered into life, and of the mother whom your care has saved."

Having spoken thus, Andrée, without giving way to emotion, made her preparations for the change, and at six o'clock in the evening she passed through the wicket-door of the parlor of Saint Denis, before the bars of which Philippe, unable to control his emotions, uttered within himself a farewell, perhaps eternal.

Poor Andrée's fortitude suddenly left her. She turned and ran back to her brother with outstretched arms; he also extended his arms toward her. They met, notwithstanding the cold barrier of bars between them, and their tears were mingled on their burning cheeks.

"Adieu! adieu!" murmured Andrée, whose grief burst forth in sobs.

"Adieu!" replied Philippe, stifling his despair.

"If you ever find my son," said Andrée, in a low voice, "do not let me die till I have embraced him."

"Be assured. Adieu! adieu!"

Andrée tore herself from her brother's arms, and supported by a lay sister went forward, constantly looking back at him as he stood in the deep shadow. So long as he could see her he made signs to her with his head and by shaking his handkerchief. At length he received a last farewell, which she sent to him from the end of the dim passage-way. Then an iron gate fell between them with a melancholy sound, and all was over.

Philippe took post at Saint Denis; with his portmanteau behind him he journeyed all that night, all the following day, and in the evening arrived at Havre. He slept at the first hostelry he found, and at daybreak the next day was out on the wharves inquiring about the earliest departures for America. He learned that the brig "Adonis" would sail that very day for New York. He sought out the captain, who was finishing his preparations, and on paying the price for the passage was admitted as a

passenger. Then, having written a last letter to Madame la Dauphine, declaring his respectful devotion and his gratitude, he sent his baggage on board, and himself embarked at the time of high tide.

Four o'clock was striking in the tower of François I. when the "Adonis" left the channel under foresail and topsails. The sea was of a sombre blue, the sky red on the horizon. Philippe, leaning on the railing, after having saluted the few passengers, his travelling companions, stood gazing at the coast of France, which gradually became embrowned with a purplish smoke, as the brig, unfurling more sail, moved rapidly to the right and gained the open sea. Very soon the shore of France, fellow-passengers, and the ocean disappeared; dark night had covered all with its extended wings. Philippe went to his little cabin to read over the copy of his letter to the dauphiness, which might serve for a prayer addressed to the Creator, as well as for a farewell addressed to a fellow-creature. Philippe had written as follows: —

MADAME, — A man without hope and without support withdraws himself from you with regret at having done so little for your future Majesty. He goes to encounter the storms and tempests of the sea while you remain amid the troubles and dangers of government. Young, beautiful, adored, surrounded by respectful friends and idolizing servants, you will forget him whom your royal hand has condescended to lift above the crowd. But I shall never forget you. I am going to a new world to study the means of serving you more effectively upon your throne. I leave to you my sister, poor abandoned flower, who will have no other sun than the light of your countenance. Deign sometimes to condescend to her; and in the midst of your joy, of your omnipotence, in the chorus of unanimous devotion, listen, I beseech you, to the benediction of an exile who will no longer hear you, and perhaps will never see you again.

After reading this letter Philippe's heart was oppressed. The melancholy sound of the groaning vessel and the rush of the waves which broke against the prow made a combination of noises which would have saddened the happiest imaginations. The night was long and painful to the young man. A visit which the captain made him in the morning did not restore him to a satisfactory state of mind. That officer informed him that the greater part of the passengers feared the sea and confined themselves to their berths, and that the passage promised to be short, but disagreeable, owing to the violence of the wind.

Philippe fell into the custom of dining with the captain, and having breakfast served in his cabin; and not finding himself well-hardened against the inconveniences of a sea-voyage, he acquired the habit of spending some hours on the deck reclining on his large military cloak. The rest of the time he employed in planning his future course, and in supporting his mind by solid reading. Sometimes he met his fellow-passengers. There were two ladies on their way to take possession of an inheritance in North America, and four men, one of whom, already old, had with him two sons. These were the cabin passengers. On the other side Philippe once noticed some men of an appearance and bearing more common; he found nothing there to occupy his attention.

In proportion as habit diminished his suffering, Philippe recovered his serenity. Some fine days, clear and free from storms, announced to the passengers the approach to temperate latitudes. Then they remained longer on deck; then, in the night, Philippe, who had concealed his name even from the captain, that he might not have to talk on any subject he dreaded to approach, — Philippe heard, in his cabin, steps over his head; he even heard the voice of the captain, who doubtless was walking

with a passenger. It was a reason why he should not go up. He therefore opened his port-hole, to breathe a little fresh air, and waited for the morning.

Once only during the night, hearing neither voices nor footsteps, he ascended to the deck. The night was warm, the sky clouded, and in the wake of the vessel were seen, springing up in whirls, thousands of phosphorescent atoms. The night apparently had seemed to the passengers too dark and too stormy; for Philippe saw no one on the stern-deck. But forward, on the bow and leaning against the mast of the bowsprit, motionless in sleep or meditation, was a dark figure, which in the dim light Philippe could hardly distinguish, — doubtless some second-class passenger, some poor exile looking forward to the arrival in America, while Philippe himself was regretting the departure from France.

Philippe contemplated that motionless passenger a long time; then feeling the cold of the early morning, he prepared to return to his cabin. Meantime the passenger at the prow gazed at the sky, which began to grow light. Philippe heard the captain coming, and turned round.

"You are taking the morning air, Captain?" he said.

"Monsieur, I am just out of bed."

"You have been anticipated by some of your passengers, as you see."

"By you; but officers are, like sailors, early birds."

"Oh, not by me, only!" said Philippe. "See, yonder, that man who meditates so profoundly; he also is one of your passengers, is he not?"

The captain looked and appeared to be surprised.

"Who is that man?" asked Philippe.

"A — merchant," said the captain, with hesitation.

"Who is running after a fortune?" murmured Philippe. "This brig goes too slowly for him."

The captain, instead of replying, went forward to the passenger, and spoke to him, and Philippe saw him disappear down the companion-way.

"You have disturbed his meditations," said Philippe to the captain, who rejoined him. "He did not annoy me, however."

"No, Monsieur, I warned him that the morning cold is dangerous in these latitudes. Passengers of the second class have not good cloaks, like you."

"Where are we, Captain?"

"Monsieur, to-morrow we shall see the Azore Islands, at one of which we will take in a little fresh water, for it is very warm."

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE AZORE ISLANDS.

The next day, as the captain had predicted, the passengers could see islands in the northeast, far off under the dazzling sun. They were the Azores. The wind was fair, and the brig made good progress. Toward three o'clock they were near enough for a complete view. When they had approached within the distance of a cannon-shot from the nearest island, the brig was brought up into the wind, and the crew prepared to go ashore for some barrels of fresh water, as the captain had promised. All the passengers welcomed the pleasure of a trip to the shore. To place the feet on solid ground after twenty days and nights of painful navigation is a sort of pleasure which those only can appreciate who have made a long voyage.

"Gentlemen," said the captain to the passengers who he thought were undecided, "you have five hours for a trip to the shore. Take advantage of the opportunity. You will find on that little island, entirely uninhabited, springs of ice-water for you who are naturalists, and rabbits and red partridges for you who are sportsmen."

Philippe took his gun and ammunition. "But, Captain," said he, "do you remain on board? Why do you not come with us?"

"Because yonder," replied the captain, pointing out to sea, "comes a vessel of suspicious appearance, — a vessel which has followed me for four days. I wish to see what she means to do."

Philippe, satisfied with the explanation, got into the last boat and started for the shore. The ladies and several other passengers, of both classes, did not care to take the chances of the trip, or awaited their turn. The two boats then moved away, carrying joyous sailors, and passengers more joyous still.

The captain's last words were: "At eight o'clock, gentlemen, the last boat will go for you. Consider that as settled; those who are behind time will be left."

When all the party, naturalists and sportsmen, had landed, the sailors immediately entered a cavern, situated about a hundred paces from the shore, and which turned at a right angle near the entrance, as if to avoid the rays of the sun. From a living spring, clear, bluish water glided over the mossy rocks, and was lost in fine sand within the cavern. Here the sailors stopped and filled their casks, which then they rolled toward the shore.

Philippe watched them at their work. He admired the tinted shades of the cavern, and the freshness and gentle noise of the water as it glided from fall to fall. He was surprised at finding at first dense darkness and intense cold, while after a few minutes the temperature became mild, and the darkness was pierced by a soft, mysterious light. Thus with arms outstretched and knocking against the rocky sides, he had begun to follow the sailors without seeing them; and then by degrees every face, every form, became clear and distinct. Philippe preferred, as to clearness, the light of that grotto to the light of heaven, so glaring and harsh in full day in those latitudes. Meantime he heard the voices of his companions die away in the distance. One or two gunshots echoed along the mountain; then all noises ceased, and Philippe was alone. The sailors had accomplished their task, and would not return to the grotto.

Philippe yielded himself to the charm of that solitude and to the thoughts whirling in his brain. He stretched himself out upon the soft, luxurious sand, with his back against the rocks carpeted with aromatic herbs, and sank into meditation. The hours rolled on. He had forgotten the world. At his side his gun, unloaded, leaned against the rock, and that he might lie more comfortably, he had taken from his pockets the pistols which were his inseparable companions. All his past life came up before him, slowly, solemnly, as a warning or a reproach; all his future took flight before him, like the timid bird which one may touch with a look, but never with the hand.

While Philippe thus dreamed, doubtless others, within a hundred feet of him, dreamed, laughed, and hoped. He had an insensible perception of that movement, and more than once he thought he heard the boatmen's oars as they conveyed passengers to the vessel or brought other passengers to the shore, — the former surfeited with the day's pleasures, the latter eager to enjoy them in their turn. But his meditation had not yet been disturbed, — either because the entrance to the grotto had escaped notice, or because those who observed it disdained to enter.

Suddenly a shadow, timid, undecided, interposed itself between the light of day and the grotto, at its very entrance. Philippe saw some one walking, with his hands extended before him, and his head bent down, in the direction of the murmuring water. This person fell once against the rocks, his foot having slipped on some herbs. Then Philippe rose and went forward, offering his hand to the visitor to help him find a safe path. In this courteous action his fingers touched the hand of the traveller in the darkness. "This way," he said, with politeness; "Monsieur, the water is in this direction."

At the sound of that voice the stranger quickly raised

his head, and prepared to answer, exposing his face in the azure twilight of the grotto. But Philippe, with a sudden cry of horror, started back. The unknown also drew back with an exclamation of fright.

"Gilbert!"

"Philippe!"

These two words burst forth at the same time, like subterranean thunder. Then ensued the sound of a sort of struggle. Philippe had seized with both hands his enemy's throat and dragged him to the depths of the cavern. Gilbert suffered himself to be dragged, without uttering a word of protest. Pushed against the rocky wall of the interior, he could recoil no farther.

"Scoundrel! I have you at last!" roared Philippe. "God has delivered you into my hands; God is just."

Gilbert was very pale, but made no movement; his arms hung idly by his sides.

"Oh, coward and villain!" said Philippe; "he has n't even the instinct of the wild beast, which defends itself."

But Gilbert replied in gentle tones, "Defend myself! and why?"

"True, you know well that you are in my power; you know well that you have deserved the most terrible punishment. All your crimes are proved. You have loaded a woman with shame; you have killed her by cruelty. It was not enough for you to dishonor a virgin; you wished also to assassinate a mother!"

Gilbert made no reply. Philippe, who gradually became wild with the heat of his own fury, again raised violent hands against Gilbert. The young man offered no resistance.

"You are not a man, then?" said Philippe, shaking him in his rage; "you have only the face of a man?

What! — not even resistance? But I am strangling you, — you see it plainly. Resist, then; defend yourself, coward! coward! assassin!"

Gilbert felt the sharp fingers of his enemy in his throat. He drew himself up, stiffened himself, and vigorous as a lion, by a single movement of his shoulders cast Philippe off from him. Then he crossed his arms. "You see," said he, "that I could defend myself if I wished; but why should I? Now you run to your gun. I would rather be killed at once than torn by finger-nails and crushed by shameful blows."

Philippe had, in fact, seized his gun, but at these words he laid it aside. "No," he murmured. Then, aloud, "Where are you going? How are you here?"

"I embarked in the 'Adonis.'"

"You hid yourself, then? you saw me?"

"I did not even know you were on board."

"You lie!"

"I do not lie."

"How is it that I have not seen you?"

"Because I have left my berth only at night."

"You see! — you hide yourself!'

"Certainly."

"From me?"

"No, I tell you; I go to America on a mission, and I must not be seen. The captain has lodged me apart for that reason."

"You hide yourself, I tell you, to conceal from me your presence, and especially to hide the child which you have stolen."

"The child?" said Gilbert.

"Yes; you have stolen and carried away that child, to make of him a weapon by which some day you may profit villain!"

Gilbert shook his head. "I have taken the child," he said, "so that no one may teach him to despise or to deny his father."

Philippe paused for a moment. "If that is true," said he, "if I could believe it, you would be less villanous than I thought; but you have stolen, — why have you not denied it?"

"Stolen? I have stolen?"

"You have stolen the child."

"He is my son! he is mine! We do not steal, Monsieur, when we take our own."

"Listen!" said Philippe, trembling with rage. "Just now I thought I would kill you. I had sworn it; I had the right to do it."

Gilbert did not answer.

"Now God enlightens me. God has thrown you in my way as if to say to me: 'Vengeance is useless; vengeance is right only when one is abandoned by God.' I will not kill you, I will only destroy the structure of misery you have erected. This child is your means of mischief for the future; you must give me this child."

"But I have him not," said Gilbert. "One does not take to sea a child fifteen days old."

"You must have procured a nurse for him; why did you not bring away the nurse?"

"I tell you that I have not brought away the child."

"Then you have left him in France. In what part have you left him?"

Gilbert was silent.

"Answer! where have you placed him at nurse, and with what means of support?"

Gilbert was silent.

"Ah, scoundrel, you defy me!" said Philippe. "Are you not afraid of arousing my anger? Will you tell me

where my sister's child is hidden? Will you give me this child?"

"My child is my own," murmured Gilbert.

"Villain! you see plainly that you will die!"

"I will not give up my child."

"Gilbert, listen; I speak to you kindly. Gilbert, I will try to forget the past; I will try to pardon you. Gilbert, you understand my generosity, do you not? I pardon you! I forgive all the shame and misfortune you have brought upon our house; it is a great sacrifice. Give me back this child. Would you have more? Would you have me try to overcome the so justifiable repugnance of Andrée? Would you have me intercede for you? Well, I will do it if you give me back this child! One word more: Andrée loves her son — your son — madly: she will be moved by your repentance, I promise you. But give me back this child, Gilbert, give it back to me!"

Gilbert folded his arms, fixing upon Philippe a glance of gloomy determination. "You have not believed me," he said; "I do not believe you. Not that you are a dishonest man, but because I have sounded the depth of the prejudice of caste. There is no possible return, — no more pardon! We are mortal enemies. You are the stronger, therefore be the conqueror. I do not ask you for your weapon, do not ask me for mine."

"You confess, then, that it is a weapon?"

"Against scorn, yes; against ingratitude, yes; against insult, yes!"

"Once more, Gilbert," said Philippe, foaming at the mouth, "will you?"

"No."

"Take care!"

"No."

"I do not wish to murder you; I wish you to have the chance of killing Andrée's brother. One crime more! Ah, ah! that is tempting. Take this pistol; here is another. Let us each count three and fire," and he threw one of the pistols at Gilbert's feet.

The young man stood motionless. "A duel," he said, "is precisely what I refuse."

"You prefer to have me kill you!" cried Philippe, mad with rage and despair.

"I prefer to be killed by you."

"Reflect. I am beside myself."

"I have reflected."

"It is my right; God will absolve me."

"I know it, — kill me."

"For the last time, will you fight?"

"No."

"You refuse to defend yourself?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, die like a villain of whom I rid the earth! die like a heathen, die like a thief, die like a dog!" and Philippe discharged his pistol at Gilbert, almost touching him with the muzzle. The latter stretched out his arms, swayed first backward, then forward, and fell upon his face without uttering a cry. Philippe felt the sand under his feet wet with the warm blood; he completely lost his senses, and rushed out of the cavern. Before him was the shore; a boat was waiting. Eight o'clock had been announced as the hour of departure; it was now some minutes after eight.

"Ah, here you are, Monsieur!" said the sailors. "You are the last; every one is on board. What have you killed?"

Philippe, hearing this word, lost consciousness. They took him on board the ship, which was unfurling its sails.

"Is every one on board?" asked the captain.

"Here is the last passenger," replied the sailors. "He must have had a fall, for he has fainted."

The captain gave the necessary orders, and the brig sailed rapidly away from the Azores, at the same time that the unknown vessel, which had annoyed them so long, entered the harbor under the American flag.

The captain of the "Adonis" exchanged signals with this vessel, and reassured, apparently at least, he continued his course toward the west, and was soon lost in the darkness of night.

It was not until the next day that they discovered that one passenger was missing.

EPILOGUE.

On the ninth of May, 1774, at eight o'clock in the evening, Versailles presented a most curious and interesting spectacle.

From the first day of the month the king, Louis XV., attacked with a malady, the serious nature of which his physicians at first dared not confess to him, had been confined to his bed, anxiously consulting the countenances of those who surrounded him, to discover in them some reflection of the truth or some ray of hope.

The physician Bordeu had pronounced the king suffering from an attack of small-pox of the most malignant nature, and the physician La Martinière, who had agreed with his colleague as to the nature of the king'scomplaint, gave it as his opinion that his Majesty should be informed of the real state of the case, in order that, both spiritually and temporally, as a king and as a Christian, he might take measures for his own safety and that of his kingdom. "His most Christian Majesty," said he, "should have extreme unction administered to him."

La Martinière represented the party of the dauphin,—the opposition. Bordeu asserted that the bare mention of the serious nature of the disease would kill the king, and said that for his part he would not be a party to such regicide.

Bordeu represented Madame Dubarry's party. In fact, to call in the aid of the Church to the king was to expel

the favorite. When God enters at one door, it is full time for Satan to make his exit by the other.

In the mean time, during all these intestine divisions of the faculty, of the royal family, and of the different parties of the court, the disease took quiet possession of the aged, corrupt, and worn-out frame of the king, and set up such a strong position that neither remedies nor prescriptions could dislodge it.

From the first symptoms of the attack, Louis beheld his couch surrounded by his two daughters, the favorite, and the courtiers whom he especially delighted to honor. They still laughed and stood firm by one another.

Suddenly the austere and ominous countenance of Madame Louise of France appeared at Versailles. She had left her cell to give to her father, in her turn, the cares and consolations he so much required. She entered, pale and stern as a statue of Fate. She was no longer a daughter to a father, a sister to her fellow-sisters; she rather resembled those ancient prophetesses who in the evil day of adversity poured in the startled ears of kings the boding cry, "Woe! woe! woe!" She fell upon Versailles like a thunder-shock at the very hour when it was Madame Dubarry's custom to visit the king, who kissed her white hands, and pressed them in soft caresses to his aching brow and burning cheeks. At sight of her all fled. The sisters, trembling, sought refuge in a neighboring chamber. Madame Dubarry bent the knee and hastened to her apartment; the privileged courtiers retreated in disorder to the antechambers; the two physicians alone remained standing by the fireside.

"My daughter!" murmured the king, opening his eyes, heavy with pain and fever.

"Yes, Sire," said the princess, "your daughter."

"And you come —"

"To remind you of God!"

The king raised himself in an upright posture and attempted to smile.

"For you have forgotten God," resumed Madame Louise.

"I!"

"And I wish to recall him to your thoughts."

"My daughter, I am not so near death, I trust, that your exhortations need to be so very urgent. My illness is very slight, — a slow fever, attended with some inflammation."

"Your malady, Sire," interrupted the princess, "is that which, according to etiquette, should summon around your Majesty's couch all the great prelates of the kingdom. When a member of the royal family is attacked with small-pox, the rites of the Church should be administered without loss of time."

"Madame!" exclaimed the king, greatly agitated, and becoming deadly pale, "what is that you say?"

"Madame!" broke in the terrified physicians.

"I repeat," continued the princess, "that your Majesty is attacked with the small-pox."

The king uttered a cry.

"The physicians did not tell me so," he replied.

"They had not the courage. But I look forward to another kingdom for your Majesty than the kingdom of France. Draw near to God, Sire, and solemnly review your past life."

"The small-pox!" muttered Louis; "a fatal disease! — Bordeu! — La Martinière! — can it be true?"

The two practitioners hung their heads.

"Then I am lost!" said the king, more and more terrified.

"All diseases can be cured, Sire," said Bordeu, taking

the initiative, "especially when the patient preserves his composure of mind."

"God gives peace to the mind and health to the body," replied the princess.

"Madame," said Bordeu, boldly, although in a low voice, "you are killing the king!"

The princess deigned no reply. She approached the sick monarch, and taking his hand, which she covered with kisses, "Break with the past, Sire," said she, "and give an example to your people. No one warned you; you ran the risk of perishing eternally. Promise solemnly to live a Christian life if you are spared; die like a Christian if God calls you hence."

As she concluded she imprinted a second kiss on the royal hand, and with slow step took her way through the antechambers. There she let her long black veil fall over her face, descended the staircase with a grave and majestic air, and entered her carriage, leaving behind her a stupefaction and terror which cannot be described.

The king could not rouse his spirits, except by dint of questioning his physicians; but the blow had been struck. "I do not wish," said he, "that the scenes of Metz with the Duchesse de Châteauroux should be re-enacted here. Send for Madame d'Aiguillon, and request her to take Madame Dubarry with her to Rueil."

This order was equivalent to an expulsion. Bordeu attempted to remonstrate, but the king ordered him to be silent. Bordeu, moreover, saw his colleague ready to report all that passed to the dauphin, and well aware what would be the issue of the king's malady, he did not persist; but going out from the royal chamber he proceeded to acquaint Madame Dubarry with the blow which had just fallen on her fortunes.

The countess, terrified at the ominous and insulting

expression which she saw already on every face around her, hastened to withdraw. In an hour she was without the walls of Versailles, seated beside the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, who, like a trustworthy and grateful friend, was taking the disgraced favorite to her chateau of Rueil, which had descended to her from the great Richelieu.

Bordeu, on his side, shut the door of the king's chamber against all the royal family, under pretext of contagion. Louis's apartment was thenceforward walled up; no one might enter but Religion and Death.

The king had the last rites of the Church administered to him that same day, and this news soon spread through Paris, where the disgrace of the favorite was already known, and circulated from mouth to mouth.

All the court hastened to pay their respects to the dauphin, who closed his doors, and refused to see any one.

But the following day the king was better, and sent the Duc d'Aiguillon to carry his compliments to Madame Dubarry. This day was May 9, 1774.

The court deserted the pavilion occupied by the dauphin, and flocked in such crowds to Rueil, where the favorite was residing, that since the banishment of Monsieur de Choiseul to Chanteloup such a string of carriages had never been witnessed.

Things were in this position, therefore: would the king live, and Madame Dubarry still remain queen; or would the king die, and Madame Dubarry sink to the condition of an infamous and execrable courtesan? This was why Versailles, on the evening of May 9, in the year 1774, presented such a curious and interesting spectacle.

On the Place d'Armes, before the palace, several groups of persons had formed in front of the railing who seemed affected and anxious to hear the news. They were citizens of Versailles or of Paris, and every now and then,

with all the politeness imaginable, they questioned the guards who were pacing slowly up and down the Court of Honor, with their hands behind their backs, respecting the king's health.

Gradually these groups dispersed. The inhabitants of Paris took their seats in the stage-coaches to return peaceably to their own homes; while those of Versailles, sure of having the earliest news from the fountain-head, also retired to their several dwellings. No one was to be seen in the streets but the patrols of the watch, who performed their duty a little more quietly than usual; and that gigantic world, called the Palace of Versailles, became by degrees shrouded in darkness and silence, like that greater world which contained it.

At the angle of the street bordered with trees which extends in front of the palace, a man advanced in years was seated on a stone-bench overshadowed by the already leafy boughs of the horse-chestnuts, with his expressive and poetic features turned toward the chateau, leaning with both hands on his cane, and supporting his chin on his hands. He was an old man, bent by age and ill-health, but his eye still sparkled with something of its youthful fire, and his thoughts glowed even more brightly than his eyes. He was absorbed in melancholy contemplation, and did not perceive a second personage who, after peeping curiously through the iron railing and questioning the guards, crossed the esplanade in a diagonal direction, and advanced straight toward the bench with the intention of seating himself upon it.

This personage was a young man with projecting cheek-bones, low forehead, aquiline nose slightly bent to one side, and a sardonic smile. While advancing toward the stone-bench he chuckled sneeringly, although alone, seeming to reply by this laughter to some secret thought.

When within three paces of the bench he perceived the old man, and paused, scanning him with his oblique and stealthy glance, although evidently fearing to let his purpose be seen. "You are enjoying the fresh air, Monsieur?" said he, approaching him with an abrupt movement.

The old man raised his head.

"Ha!" exclaimed the new-comer, "it is my illustrious master!"

"And you are my young practitioner?" said the old man.

"Will you permit me to take a seat beside you, Monsieur?"

"Most willingly," and the old man made room on the bench beside him.

"It appears that the king is getting better?" said the young man. "The people rejoice," and he burst a second time into his sneering laugh.

The old man made no reply.

"The whole day long the carriages have been rolling from Paris to Rueil, and from Rueil to Versailles. The Comtesse Dubarry will marry the king as soon as his health is re-established," and he burst into a louder laugh than before.

Still the old man made no reply.

"Pardon me if I laugh at Fate," continued the young man, with a gesture of nervous impatience, "but every good Frenchman, look you, loves his king, and my king is better to-day."

"Do not jest thus on such a subject, Monsieur," said the old man, gently. "The death of a man is always a misfortune for some one, and the death of a king is frequently a great misfortune for all."

"Even the death of Louis XV.?" interrupted the young man, in a tone of irony. "Oh, my dear master, a distin-

guished philosopher like you to sustain such a proposition! I know all the energy and skill of your paradoxes, but I cannot compliment you on this one."

The old man shook his head.

"And besides," added the new-comer, "why think of the king's death? Who speaks of such an event? The king has the small-pox; well, we all know that complaint. The king has beside him Bordeu and La Martinière, who are skilful men. Oh, I will wager a trifle, my dear master, that Louis the Well-Beloved will recover! Only this time the French people do not suffocate themselves in churches, putting up vows for him, as on the occasion of his former illness. Mark me, everything grows antiquated and is abandoned!"

"Silence!" said the old man, shuddering, — "silence! for I tell you, you are speaking of a man over whom the destroying angel hovers at this moment."

His young companion, surprised at this strange language, looked at the speaker, whose eyes were fixed on the façade of the chateau.

"Then you have more positive intelligence?" he asked.

"Look!" said the old man, pointing with his finger to one of the windows of the palace; "what do you behold yonder?"

"A window lighted up, — is that what you mean?"

"Yes; but lighted in what manner?"

"By a wax candle placed in a little lantern."

"Precisely."

"Well?"

"Well, young man, do you know what the flame of that wax-light represents?"

"No, Monsieur."

"It represents the life of the king."

The young man looked more fixedly at his aged companion, as if to be certain that he was in his senses.

"A friend of mine, Monsieur de Jussieu," continued the old man, "has placed that wax-light there, which will burn as long as the king is alive."

"It is a signal, then?"

"A signal which Louis XV.'s successor devours with his eyes from behind some neighboring curtain. This signal, which shall warn the ambitious of the dawn of a new reign, informs a poor philosopher like myself of the instant when the breath of the Almighty sweeps away, at the same moment, an epoch and a human existence."

The young man shuddered in his turn, and moved closer to his companion.

"Oh," said the aged philosopher, "mark well this night, young man! Behold what clouds and tempests it bears in its murky bosom! The morning which will succeed it I shall witness no doubt, for I am not yet old enough to abandon hope of seeing the morrow; but a reign is perhaps about to begin which you will witness even to the end, and which includes — like this night — mysterious events which I shall not see. It is not, therefore, without interest that I watch yonder trembling flame, whose signification I have just explained to you."

"True, my master," murmured the young man, "most true."

"Louis XIV. reigned seventy-three years," continued the old man. "How many will Louis XVI. reign?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the younger of the two, pointing to the window, which had just become shrouded in darkness.

"The king is dead!" said the old man, rising with a sort of terror; and both kept silence for some minutes.

Suddenly a chariot, drawn by eight fiery horses, started

at full gallop from the court-yard of the palace. Two out-riders preceded it, each holding a torch in his hand. In the chariot were the dauphin, Marie Antoinette, and Madame Elizabeth, the sister of the king. The flame of the torches threw a gloomy light on their pale features. The carriage passed close to the two men, within ten paces of the bench from which they had risen.

"Long live King Louis XVI.! Long live the queen!" shouted the young man in a loud, harsh voice, as if he meant to insult this new-born Majesty instead of saluting it.

The dauphin bowed; the queen showed her face at the window, sad and severe. The carriage dashed on and disappeared.

"My dear Monsieur Rousseau," said the younger of the two spectators, "then Madame Dubarry is a widow."

"To-morrow she will be exiled," said his aged companion. "Adieu, Monsieur Marat!"

THE END.